

# ELEMENTARY ENGLISH



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# ELEMENTARY ENGLISH

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No. 2

## *Magical Caddie*

NAOMI BUCHHEIMER<sup>1</sup>

Fortunately for all of us, Nora and David Brink came home from Sunday School—one day about twenty years ago—with a poorly written Bible newspaper. Their mother, looking it over, decided then and there that she could equal or excel the stories in that paper. So Carol Ryrie Brink began to write for her own youngsters—first short stories, then whole books. She soon found that other young people appreciated her work just as much as her own children did. The Macmillan Company published one book after another which flowed from her fluent pen. Today, her children are grown up, but now Mrs. Brink has three grandchildren who will soon be old enough to listen to grandmother's tales of adventure.

Although Carol Ryrie Brink sets her novels for children in far-off places and far-off times, we must remember that it is natural for her to do so. Her own interesting life has provided the basis for much of her writing. Born in Idaho, in what had so recently been frontier country, she was brought up by her maternal grandmother after her parents' untimely death. Her own grandmother's stories of her girlhood stuck

with Carol Ryrie until years later when *Caddie Woodlawn* was born. In fact, Mrs. Brink recalls sending her grandmother questionnaires to answer so that she could fill in the gaps in her own knowledge of pioneer life. The girl, Carol Ryrie, married a young mathematician by the name of Raymond Brink. Professor Brink is now head of the mathematics department at the University of Minnesota. *Family Grandstand*, the latest Brink book, is certainly based on actual campus living. The Brinks and their two children have traveled extensively and frequently. *Mademoiselle Misfortune* and *Anything Can Happen on the River* were direct outgrowths of their trips to France during the early '30's. In fact, only one book, *Baby Island*, seems to be far afield from Mrs. Brink's own experience. And *Baby Island* is a fascinatingly imaginative book of a very original nature.

Carol Brink acknowledges her indebtedness to her family in dedicating her books. *Caddie Woodlawn*, of course, was dedicated to her grandmother, and *Magical Melons* includes a note saying that her

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grandmother, the original Caddie, had died four years before the publication of this book. *All Over Town* was dedicated to her Aunt Elsie; and *Lad with a Whistle*, to the memory of Alexander Ryrie, her father. *Mademoiselle Misfortune* bears an inscription to her daughter, Nora, and *Family Grandstand* is dedicated in part to Susan Carol Hunter, Nora's older child. Professor and Mrs. Brink and their son, David, were "the crew of the Minnehaha" to whom *Anything Can Happen on the River* was dedicated. (The Minnehaha was the motorboat in which the Brink family navigated the Seine and Yonne Rivers.)

It would appear sensible to discuss the three pioneer-life books together. The two books about the Woodlawns, *Caddie Woodlawn* (1936) and *Magical Melons* (1944), are highly realistic. One feels that Mrs. Brink fully understands both children and pioneers. For instance, Hetty, Caddie's younger sister, is a little know-it-all and tell-it-all. But Mrs. Brink helps her young readers to understand Hetty by explaining that Hetty really had no close companionship within the family and that she found gossip the only way to make herself feel important. In *Magical Melons*, Mrs. Brink returns to the character of Hetty and shows how the child made herself useful to the doctor's wife who needed her friendship and help. There are countless examples of historically valid pioneer details such as the Indian uprising scare, the authentic songs sung by the hired man, the school which was in session for two months in summer and three in winter, the circuit rider, the description of the mail delivery, the discussion about the expense of sulphur matches, and the statement by Mr.

Woodlawn that he had paid a man to fight for him in the Civil War.

A fine basic philosophy seems to shine through these stories as well as through all the Brink books. Stated succinctly, it is the belief that everyone is of some use in the world. Even Obediah, the bully, saves the schoolhouse from fire. Even Hetty, the tattler, helps the doctor's wife. This delicate undercurrent, coupled with a wise use of humor and a deep understanding of human emotions, makes the Brink books readable at any level. An adult revels in the antics of pre-adolescent Caddie as much as any child. This author never "talks down" to her audience in any sense of the word. Her vocabulary and her situations are aimed high enough so that anybody can enjoy her books. Who would not laugh at the scene in which the children discover Cousin Lucy's wig? Who would not think that Cousin Lucy's leave-taking, at which the children make themselves cry by smelling onions, was funny?

The other pioneer book, *All Over Town* (1939), is also somewhat autobiographical. Mrs. Brink asserts in the opening note that the scene of the book, a small western town called Warsaw Junction, is "something like" the town in which she grew up. Here, instead of Caddie, the central character is Ardeth Howard, the motherless child of a country doctor. Her playmates are the minister's sons who are forever getting into mischief. Here again, that gentle humor provides many good laughs for the reader. Nobody could possibly keep a straight face while reading about the tea party given by the boys and Ardeth for the good ladies of Warsaw Junction. Again, too, we have that understanding of child



psychology which is shown when describing the manner in which Ardeth ate her ice-cream soda, and when explaining how Martin, the older son of the minister, got the neighborhood youngsters to envy his little brother Henry instead of ridiculing him for his "sissy part" in the town pageant. Excitement is kept at a high level in these books by the fire and dog poisonings in *All Over Town*, and by the possible inheritance and Caddie's dramatic horseback ride to warn Indian Joe in *Caddie Woodlawn*. Mrs. Brink illustrates that the minister's sons have their function in life in general and in *Warsaw Junction* in particular when they solve the mystery of the fire and bring the village back-sliders into the church.

*Mademoiselle Misfortune* (1937) and *Anything Can Happen on the River* (1934), both inspired by the Brink family's sojourns in France, are again based on the theory of every person's usefulness to society. In *Mademoiselle Misfortune*, Alice Moreau, one of seven children (six of whom are girls), feels that she is a misfortune to her parents because there are so many female children, all of whom must be provided with dowries or "dots." Alice and two of her brothers and sisters prove their worth by easing the burden on their parents and fending for themselves, while they remain loyal to their family. The excitement in this book comes from the Peruvian gang who are trying to catch Miss Weatherwax, the American woman whom Alice is looking after. The humor is unbeatable. When Miss Weatherwax and an irate Frenchman have a minor automobile accident, Alice "interprets" in such a way that the two protagonists become friends. Speaking of interpreting,

Mrs. Brink's use of French words adds color to the story, for she explains the words so subtly that the reader feels that he knew them all the time. The description of Alice's and Miss Weatherwax's journey through France is educational without being didactic. The way in which the Moreau girls used their vivid imaginations in dressing up and in role playing is indicative of Mrs. Brink's understanding of children. *Mademoiselle Misfortune*, dedicated to the author's daughter, is more suitable reading for girls than for boys.

On the other hand, *Anything Can Happen on the River* would probably interest boys more than girls. The hero is a fourteen year old orphan, Jacques Poirer—a boy hero for the first time. The scene is Paris, about ten years after World War I. Realism is introduced by Monsieur Bonnard, the victim of gassing in the war. Yet, it must be understood that M. Bonnard is never allowed to become a gruesome or frightening person, only a pitifully sick man. Mrs. Brink's descriptions of French food fairly make the mouth water. The reader enjoys traveling with the hero in the environs of Paris. The main plot of the story, the mysterious disappearance of the houseboat which had belonged to Jacques's family, is more highly developed than in any of her other books until *Lad with a Whistle*. The scene in which poor undersized Jacques tries to share a bed with the gigantic river man, Lulu, is highly amusing. One can easily visualize the mountains and valleys created by the fat Lulu and how Jacques must have been continually falling into the valleys or been pushed out of bed by his snoring friend. The central theme of usefulness is again

demonstrated by Jacques's forlorn dependency which turns to self-assurance and maturity as he solves the family mystery and helps his benefactor to find his own missing boat.

*Baby Island* (1937), although fantastic and "Robinson Crusoeish," contains the basic elements of humor and essential usefulness of all human beings. Mary Wallace, age twelve, her younger sister, and several tiny babies, are set adrift in a life boat in the Pacific Ocean when their ocean liner is believed to be sinking. The two Wallace girls, who love babies, adapt themselves to the desert island on which they are cast ashore. In learning to adjust to their new way of living, they are surprised to find out that babies must be burped, that the ocean tide is something more significant than a lesson from a geography book. Their "Man Friday," a Cockney hermit, displays the goodness of his soul by falling in love with one of the babies and by making useful objects for the children until they are all rescued. Mixing up the "Pink" twin with the "Blue" twin and the final recognition of their difference because only one twin knew the word "crab" is one little incident which adds much humor to what could be a pathetic situation.

*Lad with a Whistle* (1941) is in many ways a child's version of *Wuthering Heights*. The bleak Scotch countryside and the dark ancestral home combine to create a mood of impending doom. The death of the Old Laird starts a series of events which end in happiness for all concerned only because this is a children's book. The mystery is carried forward by a secret panel hiding a secret room, several

thefts, nightly wanderings, burned letters, and treacherous servants. There is a boy hero again, as in *Anything Can Happen*, and that hero, Rob McFarland, is an orphan like Jacques Poret. (Both *Baby Island* and *All over Town* have motherless heroines. We may well wonder what connection there is between the choice of these circumstances and Mrs. Brink's own life.) In keeping with the themes of the other books is the ability of the orphaned beggar, Rob McFarland, to prove his worth by taking care of the Old Laird's grandchildren, at great sacrifice to himself. Sir Walter Scott figures briefly in this story, no doubt to help create a richer background for the readers of this historical novel for children.

Mrs. Brink's latest book, *Family Grandstand* (1952), published by Viking Press, deals with the Ridgeways, a faculty family at Midwest University. Mrs. Ridgeway is a writer of mystery stories and Professor Ridgeway teaches, not mathematics, but ancient history. There is no doubt, however, of the autobiographical elements involved here. The professor, an exceptionally realistic one, is very much interested in maintaining academic standards and "adechemic" dignity. This last is a new word coined by the youngest member of the Ridgeway family. In this book, Mrs. Brink employs a clever device to use adult expressions by having the literal-minded children "translate" everything that is said by their parents. For example, Mrs. Ridgeway insists that the near-by stadium is "in their laps" and she often maintains that their old faculty home was "built in the year one." But Susan or George, the older Ridgeway children, would explain that

"the stadium isn't really in our laps. It's a block and a half down the street," and the children would know that although Mother said that the house was built in the year one, it was just her funny way of saying 1895! There are at least eight well-integrated threads of plot in *Family Grandstand*, and all of them work out satisfactorily. The children are finally allowed to use the yard as a parking lot on football days; their football hero passes chemistry and can stay on the team; they become the legal owners of an over-sized dog; they win third prize for their home-coming decorations; little sister is discovered *not* to be a prodigy; the canary returns; the neighborhood terrors are squelched; and Dorothy, Mrs. Ridgeway's helper who is working her way through college, learns that life can be something more than one long study period. The "Terrible Torrences," the little boys whose mother "can't do a thing with them," make an about-face when they realize that outsiders expect them to act grown-up, even though their parents do not seem to expect anything of them. In addition to the "terrors" who prove themselves, Dorothy Sturm, too, shows that she is basically a sensitive person with normal emotions, despite her stated disdain for football and her contention that she came to college for an education, not to "waste time."

Mrs. Brink's only acknowledged formula for writing successful children's books is to "express what you want to say in the simplest possible fashion." That, indeed, seems to be a fairly accurate formula for writing any type of material. Furthermore, she feels that good writing should move the writer himself as he writes it as

well as moving the reader. And, one can safely say that most sensitive adults who read her work will find themselves close to laughter or tears.

This author has a regular schedule for writing. When in St. Paul, she spends several hours in the morning at her desk. And if the writing is going exceptionally well, she will keep right on into the afternoon. When she and her husband travel, they have no pre-arranged itinerary, but settle down in whatever place takes their fancy, and Mrs. Brink continues her regular schedule. She writes her first draft in pencil so neatly that a typist can take it immediately and prepare it for the publisher.

In Mrs. Brink's comfortable home, just to the right of the fireplace, is a built-in bookcase. On the lower shelf is one book after the other bearing the name "Brink." Twelve of those volumes are the original copies of the children's and adults' books written by Carol Ryrie Brink. Others of them are translations into French, Japanese, Danish, and various other languages of her best-loved children's books. *Caddie Woodlawn*, especially, the Newbery Award book of 1937, has been adopted by the children of many nations. The bookshelf is completed by a number of books by Professor Raymond Brink on higher mathematics.

Thus Carol Ryrie Brink writes from the rich background of her own experience as well as from a mature personal philosophy. The influence of her grandmother, her extensive travels through Europe, and her life with her own family certainly provide most of the stimulation for her stories for children. Though perhaps unconsciously, her deep concern for humanity pervades

each and every one of her writings. Her belief in the personal worth of all mankind, her conviction that there is some good even behind apparent evil leave her young readers with a feeling that they should come to sense the basic goodness of all people everywhere. Lois Lenski has expressed this very adequately when she points out what the reader should get from his exploration of literature:

He acquires new respect and reverence for life in all its various manifestations. He begins to look deeper than appearance, deeper than a spoken accent or a surface materialism, deeper than social castes and conventions, to a sounder appreciation of human character. Only as a person is judged in the light of his environment, and the economic and social pressures which it brings on his way of life, can he be understood for his own true worth.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Association for Childhood Education, *Told under Spacious Skies*. The Macmillan Company, New York: 1952.

## Vocabulary Development

E. W. DOLCH<sup>1</sup>

Our conception of the problem of vocabulary development in the school depends on which of two very different ideas of "learning" we may adhere to. The older and still most widespread idea of learning is that it is acquiring or "getting"—a kind of accumulation. According to this opinion, one gathers knowledge much as he may collect stamps, or earn money, or acquire more acres of land. It believes that knowledge is "learned" in a way which is essentially memorizing. Thus one learns the combinations in arithmetic, one learns the capitals of the 48 states, one learns new word meanings. Vocabulary development, according to this idea, results from being told word meanings and remembering what one has been told. Or it consists of looking up word meanings in the dictionary and remembering what one has found there. It presupposes that people or books have the word meanings. We learn the word meanings from them. In that way we accumulate a large vocabulary. This

is, in brief, one very common view of vocabulary development.

The other view of vocabulary development starts from the premise that meaning is necessarily equivalent to experience. Much experience—much meaning; little experience, little meaning. And since words are symbols for meaning, words must be symbols for experience. The more experience one has had, the more word meaning he has; the less experience one has had, the less word meaning he has. According to this view, the only way to expand vocabulary is to expand experience. It believes that the function of the school is to expand experience, and that along with this expanding experience, vocabulary is expanded naturally and inevitably.

Thus stated, the two views seem very far apart: according to the traditional view, vocabulary is learned from people, from

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reading, from the dictionary; according to the more recent view, vocabulary is built up by the individual's experience only. But having stated this apparent opposition, we can now begin to consider how both of the two views are true in greater or less degree, and how they are interrelated.

#### *Expanding Vocabulary without Increasing Meanings*

We should begin by admitting that a great deal of our "vocabulary building" in school actually amounts to expanding the child's vocabulary without increasing his meanings. For instance, we can tell a student that the front end of a boat is called the *bow*, and the rear end is called the *stern*. He now has two new words, but his stock of meaning is not increased. He still thinks "front end of a boat" or "rear end of a boat," but now he has new symbols for this old meaning. The student has, however, benefited to the extent that, in each case, he now has one word in place of five words, and he may use this shorter way of thinking or of expressing himself.

Similarly, if we tell the student, or a dictionary tells him, that *nutrition* or *sustenance* means *food*, he again has expanded his vocabulary but without expanding meaning. It is just a case of "new word for old word." This kind of expanding of vocabulary can well be called "synonyms without distinction." New words are given for old meanings, and the student has not increased his stock of meaning at all. Of course, he has been benefited, for he can now "understand" these new words when he hears or reads them. That is, he gets *some* meaning instead of *no* meaning, but it is the old meaning already attached to a known word.

#### *New Meanings from Old*

Teachers and dictionaries and glossaries often give these "synonyms without distinction" just because they are in a hurry or because there is no time to go further. But the good teacher always tries, if she can, to show the distinction between new and old. She can say that *nutrition* means "food that builds the body," and that *sustenance* means "food that sustains life" or a more expanded explanation of these same ideas. These are "synonyms with distinction."

Pointing out the distinction between synonyms is the same process as "explaining" the meaning of new words. For instance, one may say a seascape is a "view of the sea," leaving it a matter of bare "new word for old word." But when one adds that the word compares with *landscape*, which is a "view of the land," one has explained, and added something new. One has "put two and two together." As the slogan says, something new has been added. This newness is a relationship which was not seen before. And any newness is new experience; hence this is a new experience for the student. It is new meaning made from the interrelationships of old meanings.

It is probably true that the largest part of our present educational process is this making of new meanings from old. The student brings to school meanings which correspond with his experiences at home, in the community, and in previous years of school. With those meanings, he listens to what we say or he reads the books assigned. The symbols he hears or sees arouse his old meanings, but are planned to do something more. In every statement



we make, or in every sentence of the book there is supposed to be some "newness." This newness is a new "putting together" of his past experience. The result, in addition to new ideas and thoughts, is meanings for new words or new meanings for old words. If that is the result, there has been new experience and hence true vocabulary development.

Why is it that this process of vocabulary building, so simple in principle, does not go on in every school every day to the extent it is supposed to? We know that it does not, because we all know of the thousands of young people who go through the regular "school process" but who do not come out with this expanded vocabulary. Why do they not? It is because two essential conditions are lacking, conditions that we as teachers must try to maintain.

First, if we are going to rearrange old meanings into new ones, *the old meanings must be there*; and they often are not. Every subject we teach presupposes a huge stock of old meanings. Are they there? If we gave in every class a vocabulary pretest before we began a course, we would be appalled. In a history course, for instance, we would find that the words referring to the aspects of our government, such as *Congress, executive, taxes*, or what not, are familiar but little more. In science, we would find that elementary terms such as *soil* or *moisture* have the faintest or vaguest meanings. This condition will only be remedied when every course has its rigorous and complete pretest to make sure that students have the old meanings which the textbook and teacher so naively assume.

The *second* essential for forming new meanings from old is interest. This process of putting old meanings together is done in each pupil's own mind. When the individual does it, he has an individual insight into the subject. But unless he does it, he has only a "verbal formula." Children are full of these verbal formulae. They give definitions such as "an island is a piece of land entirely surrounded by water" but get no new meaning. If you ask "Is Australia an island?" they are puzzled. They are likely to say no, but then not to be able to explain. Then you have to explain that what makes an island an island is that the water cuts it off or isolates it from other countries and peoples and so makes it different from an ordinary country. If each student can think of ways in which an island is isolated or cut off, he begins to get a new experience and therefore new meaning. So a "new verbal formula" is not new meaning unless the individual does some active "putting together" of his own. If he just repeats, it is still "just new words for old words."

When these two requirements are met, children love vocabulary building. When they "know what they are talking about," and when they are interested in the subject, they actively grasp new terms, and they modify and enlarge meanings for old terms. It is fascinating to see the process at work. The children show such a sense of power, and expanding personality. They feel they are "learning," and we all love to learn. Anyone who has participated in such learning sessions will go to great lengths to see that the old meanings are actually there, and that there is interest in working with them.

*New Experiences for New Meanings*

Modern schools are not satisfied, however, merely to rearrange and rework the old meanings which the children bring. Children have, after all, seen little and done little and felt little. If we rely entirely on the meanings and experiences they bring to school, we actually have not much to work with. So one of the major aims of the modern school is to see that children have new experiences.

Obviously, the purpose of the audio-visual program is to give new experiences so that children will get new meanings. It is most unfortunate therefore that the audio-visual movement has not been given its logical place. It is still a sort of step-child, thought of as a sort of nice supplement to school work but not of too great importance. It is of vital importance, however, and it can be made so by a certain type of planning that has been neglected.

To use the audio-visual program to its fullest in every subject at every level, the first step is to list the concepts or word meanings we want the children to acquire at that level. Then let us go through the list of concepts, each represented, of course, by a word, and see *what new experiences a real comprehension of the word requires*. Then see *how that experience can be planned for by the school*. It is as simple as that. It will be found that some words can be given meaning by pictures. Let us accumulate those pictures. Others need the seeing or handling of objects. Let the teacher set all persons in a search for those objects. This may mean the real objects or models. For instance, a Chinese junk can be got in miniature form that will show all of the characteristics of

that kind of ship (but it must include the figure of a man to show size). Other words require hearing, and the teacher may give the hearing experiences or collect phonograph records that will do so. Other words require doing, and the plan can be made for the children actually to carry out some activity for this purpose. The essence of this suggestion is that "meaning from new experience" be planned for and be made a positive, necessary part of the program.

The actual use of audio visual aids is often quite different. The special department or the teacher casts about for some materials or activities that are related to the course. These may or may not fit the vocabulary development demanded by the course. Usually they give invaluable aid, but they also leave great gaps in providing meanings for the needed vocabulary of the subject. And because audio-visual aids are not specifically tied to vocabulary development, all persons concerned are likely to think of them as a luxury, as a kind of extra. But they are not an extra or a supplement. They are the essence of the course, so far as meaning vocabulary is concerned.

Of course, all sorts of related audio-visual aids should be used in every course, over and above those required for the specific vocabulary. Audio-visual aids add much to interest. They give much information not listed in the textbook or in the outline of a course. They expand meaning vocabulary beyond the list any teacher might make. The criticism we have made of the usual audio-visual program is not to limit its present method of use, but to add to that method by a careful inventory of

just what experiences are demanded by the meanings we want the children to have.

One kind of new experience which has special interest to language teachers has often been neglected; that is "performance experiences" or "doing things" instead of talking about them. For instance, we talk a great deal about children "learning how to write," but do we plan that writing as real experience? We often make it seem a sort of stunt at which some are good and some are not. Why not definitely think of writing as experience? What kinds of writing experience will help children understand what writing is and how it fits into life? We can begin, of course, by saying that all children need experience at writing certain kinds of letters. So let us have them write real letters of congratulation, of condolence, of introduction, of persuasion, and so on. Let us make corrections on the letters, if necessary, and then have them copied and sent on their way through the mails. There are also various kinds of business letters that all children should have the experience of planning and writing.

Second, children should understand the newspaper, and so should have the experience of trying to write sections of a newspaper. They should write news stories, advertisements, editorials, reviews, and so on. Nothing but such "performance experience" will give real meaning to the terms "news story, editorial, copy writing, reviewing," and so on.

Third, children need to try their hand at various kinds of fiction—plays, short stories, planning a novel, and so on—if they are to have real meanings. The terms involved in discussing fiction are not un-

derstood except by someone who has tried to do all these things. In fact, the children can well try to write various kinds of poetry, just so that the names for those kinds of poetry may have real meaning.

The ingenious English teacher (also teaching speech perhaps) will find no end of these performance experiences that will give real meaning to the words that she is using and that are used in the text books. She will have sales talks, debates, campaign speeches, taking part in plays, panel discussions, and so on. The English teacher is usually involved in many kinds of performance experiences undertaken by the whole school as well as by her classes, but the point is that these are, educationally, not performances to star a few, to entertain the student body or parents, or the like. They are essential parts of vocabulary development for every child, and they should be planned as such.

#### *Incidental Vocabulary Development*

In this discussion, we have talked of "planned vocabulary development," as a kind of thing that is to be done by each teacher and by the school as a whole. But we do not want to neglect "incidental vocabulary development." No one will ever know whether the planned experiences of school days are more important than the incidental experiences. We plan the vocabulary of each subject and how it is to be given meaning. But there is a vast world of meaning outside that plan. Every good teacher makes excursions into that outside world whenever she can. In any forward-moving class, discussions will break out about many things, sometimes far from the prescribed course of study. All at once the teacher sees the two things that

are needed for making new meanings from old: (1) the needed old meanings, and (2) interest. So she guides the discussion, heading up points, supplying new words that will focus the thinking going on, tying things together. New meanings from old will be developed, and all will be more worthwhile persons as a result. And the teacher will not regret that some "live learning" has perhaps taken the place of some traditional material that might after all be promptly forgotten.

Similarly, we will all watch for opportunities for new experiences of many kinds, and get them for the children when we can. Schools have special features like movies, meetings, concerts, exhibits, and so on, and the teachers use them in all courses. Individual teachers plan trips, hear of special moving pictures, TV programs, plays, exhibits, things that parents can supply, and so on, and make use of them whether they are part of a regular program or not. The chief question is just "Which of the two things we might do at this moment will give the most vital and most lasting learning?" New experiences will almost always be found to give more vital meaning than words which merely try to make new meanings from old. In any event, the words will always be there for us to come back to.

#### *Summary*

We have not mentioned some traditional practices, such as making word note-

books, using the dictionary and so on, because we wished to keep the basic principles of vocabulary development directly before us. Such traditional practices fall into place when we know just what we are doing and why we are doing it. Of course we do many things in school just because we have always done them, but as the years pass, more and more men and women in education are looking hard at what they are doing and asking, "Should I be doing this, or doing it in this way?" Such a question is answered, for vocabulary development, only by looking for the aim and purpose. We have pointed out (1) that it is beneficial to a reasonable degree merely to give new words for old words, so that the listener or reader may get some meaning, even if not the fullest meaning. Then (2) we have shown that we can really get new meanings from old meanings if there is newness in the combination, that is, if the words put together old experiences that have never been joined before. But (3) we need to give more attention to giving new experiences for the sake of new meanings and vocabulary development. We need to do this systematically, discovering the need for new experience and then planning to give it. Finally (4) we will keep on developing meaning vocabulary incidentally whenever the opportunity offers for making new meanings from old, or for providing new experiences that give new meanings.



# Toward Intelligent Correctness

MILDRED A. DAWSON<sup>1</sup>

Considerable criticism is being directed against elementary schools because young people continue to make gross errors in their speech and writing even though they presumably have had much instruction in correct usage and grammar directed toward the elimination of those very errors. Anyone who walks along the street or rides a bus can confirm the fact that much of the criticism is justified. Young people—and their elders, it must be admitted—do frequently make serious errors in word usage and in sentence construction. Why do lessons in usage and grammar not take better hold? How can genuine skill in using the mother tongue be attained?

It is probable that lessons intended to improve children's use of language can be made more effective than is now generally true. The skills of usage and grammar can be learned if only those items which are fitted to the immaturity of childhood are included and then are taught properly. Some definite suggestions which are backed by research or by the best of current practice follow.

*Purpose.* Experts in language development have stated that not before adolescence do children wish to use correct language forms simply because these forms are correct. Children need other motivation. Apparently a most effective reason for trying to use good English is that Sammy realizes that he is going to make use of a specific correct usage in a genuine audience situation, such as telling a story

to another class, appearing in assembly, introducing a speaker to his classmates. Children tend to learn willingly what they realize will prove useful to them—in the immediate future.

Closely related is another basic motivation: the felt need. Sammy knows that he has been saying *seen* when he should say *saw*, and he is about to make a report on his observations. Now he really wants to say *saw*. If children are asked to eliminate only the errors which they personally make and are excused from lessons where they are not directly concerned, motivation is likely to be good. It is also advisable that children be guided into finding their own errors—possibly found on a recording made of oral communication or on one of his written papers otherwise.

*Specific and limited list.* Most nursery rhymes have a point, and the jingle about the Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe is a case in point. Children who are asked in a single year to learn a large number of usages are likely to be confused and to learn few of them. It is preferable to select a very few of the grossest errors prevalent among a pupil group and to work thoroughly at the elimination of these. It may be that few errors are common to the group; in fact, research has established the fact that most errors are individual, not prevalent among a group, and that corrective teaching must be largely individualized.

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Rather commonly accepted is the concept of levels of usage: the illiterate, the colloquial, the informally correct, and the formally correct. The elementary school is largely concerned with eliminating errors of the illiterate type; for instance, *seen* for *saw*, *have saw* for *have seen*, *have went* for *have gone*, *ourn*, *bisn*, and the like. Note that even with these serious errors, the list is limited to the actual errors made. There is no excuse for having an exercise where a child is to choose between *went* and *gone* in a sentence like this: "Sammy—— to the store for his mother." An error is not likely in the use of *went* or *gone* in this sentence.

So far as the elementary school is concerned, at least, the amount of grammar should definitely be limited to a very few items which may be understandable to the immature mind and which have at least a degree of usefulness in improving language. Somewhere in the intermediate grades, it may be convenient to introduce the terms *noun*, *verb*, *adjective*, and *adverb*, for instance. Over the years, the children will have learned a number of uses of capitalization, and it finally becomes economical to use the term *noun* when summarizing such uses; *verb*, *adjective*, and *adverb* may be used as children work to increase their vocabulary and choose the most suitable word from a group of synonyms. Of such simple nature are the grammatical concepts which may be learned in the elementary school.

*Imitation.* Children learn to speak in the first place through hearing the language spoken about them; they also acquire most of their incorrect expressions in the same way. Since correct forms must dis-

place and replace the incorrect ones, it is important that children hear repeatedly correct expressions until these latter usages come to sound familiar. Imitation is one of the most potent forces in teaching correct usage. Particularly in the primary grades should teachers purposely introduce frequently the right ways of using those words which the pupils habitually misuse.

*Understanding.* One of the precepts underlying effective drill and practice is: Help the pupils to understand before any drill is given. This is particularly important in teaching language skills. There is little use in practicing by rote that which is not understood. A hundred lessons on the "agreement of subject and predicate" can be taught to little avail if a child does not know well what is meant by the subject, by the predicate, by "agreement."

A major procedure in attaining pupils' understanding of usage and grammar is the provision of an inductive "development lesson" in which simple and concrete cases of correct usage are compared until the pupils are able to state for themselves the rule controlling the usage.

Grammar, too, can be made meaningful only to the extent that each item which is taught is immediately and intimately tied into the speech or the writing where the grammatical item operates. Suppose that Jennie has not capitalized the word Doctor when affixed to a man's name. This is the name of her physician, the only man in the world she knows by that special name. Jennie can learn the meaning of *proper noun* as she runs into instance after instance of such special titles and names. Just as an unfamiliar word in reading

may hint its meaning through its contextual use, just so should grammar be learned in the meaningful context of the pupils' oral and written expression.

Experiment has shown that only the brightest children in the elementary school can learn much grammar, and even then there is difficulty in having them apply grammatical principles to their oral and written language. But it is likely to be the dullest, least privileged children who make the most errors; and these children cannot profit from grammar—at least, during the elementary school years. They do not understand this abstract science of language. They should imitate correct models, not try to reason through the logic of grammar.

*Repetition.* Even though we may have gained an understanding of a new technique, we are likely to be fumbling and awkward in using it until we have had considerable practice. This is the case in usage, too. Smith says: "Teaching must be done directly in relationship to use, and motivated drills must be furnished to insure mastery."<sup>2</sup>

Research which was reviewed on page 85 of the Forty-Third Yearbook of the National Society of Education has indicated that there are two particularly effective types of drill on usage: (1) the choice between the right and the wrong form, once the pupils are conscious of which of the forms is correct; and (2) oral repetition of the correct form. So silent writing exercises

taken from textbooks or workbooks do little to impress correct form and to have it carry over into ordinary speech. Correct usage requires much oral repetition of the right expressions.

Much ado has been raised about the inadvisability of putting incorrect expressions before the eyes of pupils. McIntosh<sup>3</sup> concluded that there is little support "to the contention that pupils 'should never be required to work with erroneous expressions.'" (P. 55) As has been said, it is essential that the children have been taught which of two forms is correct before they are allowed to choose between the correct and incorrect forms.

*Application.* Just as the occasion for teaching correct usage and grammar (only a little, remember?) is the fact that a gross error has been made as pupils talk or write in any of the lessons of the day, so should the final mastery of the correct form come in the context of the learning activities of the entire day. It is only as children put into use the usages that have been taught in their English lessons that they actually learn it.

It would seem that effective teaching of usage is a matter of good everyday common sense. We shall teach only the really serious items; we shall teach only those children who misuse them; we shall make sure that they understand before practice is provided; then we shall expect the children to put them into practice. A narrowed program based on important actual needs is the goal.

<sup>2</sup>Dora V. Smith, "The English Curriculum in Perspective: the Elementary School," *The Elementary English Review*, XXIII (February, 1946), p. 52.

<sup>3</sup>John R. McIntosh, *The Use of Practice Exercises in the Teaching of Capitalization and Punctuation*. Teachers College Contributions to Education, No. 372, 1930.

# The Teaching of Spelling

JAMES A. FITZGERALD<sup>1</sup>

The following are fundamental questions concerning spelling: 1) What investigations are basic for selection of words, for grade placement, and for the selection of methods in teaching spelling? 2) What words are most important in spelling and when should they be presented to the child? 3) What is an effective method of learning to spell words? 4) What are the best plans of teaching spelling? 5) How can the child develop adequately the use of words in writing?<sup>2</sup>

## *Fundamental Considerations in Word Selection and Gradation*

Spelling should begin with the consideration of experiences of children as they recognize the need for learning to spell words used in writing. The stages of learning, testing, practice, and use should be correlated with child experience and need in school and outside school. The scope of instruction should include the mastery of the words used most often in writing and of the demons misspelled most frequently. Instruction should provide a method to the child for finding the spelling of words he does not know and a plan for quickly and effectively learning to spell such words so that he may be able to write them from memory when he needs them a second time.

The important research on the selection of words and their placement for study should be utilized by curriculum planners.<sup>3</sup> A child should not be made to learn to spell a word that happens to appear in a unit or assignment, and which he does not need in writing, in preference to permanently useful words. Results of in-

vestigations such as those carried out by Horn, Rinsland, Breed, Jones, Betts, McKee, Dolch, Gates, and Fitzgerald provide data on the selection and gradation of words for spelling.<sup>4</sup> The curriculum maker should carefully differentiate between reading vocabulary and spelling vocabulary needs in selecting words for study in spelling. Furthermore, a teacher must recognize the differences in interests, needs, and abilities of children when presenting words for study.

The most fundamental criterion for word selection is the *need* for the word in writing. The important criteria for grading words are the *present need* for the word in writing and the *persistency of difficulty* of the spelling for the child. A word should be presented when it is needed. If a child cannot spell the word, he must learn to spell it. If a hard word is misspelled repeatedly by a child, he should work with an effective method to master the word. Some children continue to misspell demons for years. These should be made a matter for study by each child until they are mastered.

## *Learning and Teaching Spelling*

Many children are poor spellers because of one or more of the following: 1) They are not interested in spelling. 2) The right words have not been presented to them. 3) Time has been wasted by them in studying words they did not need or words they already knew how to spell. 4) An effective method has not been taught to them for learning to spell a word. 5) A well-planned spelling program has not been inaugurated. If a child studies the words he needs and cannot spell, when he needs them in his writing, by a method which provides efficient ways of

<sup>4</sup>For a discussion of research of these investigators see James A. Fitzgerald, *A Basic Life Spelling Vocabulary* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1951), pp. 4-155.

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<sup>2</sup>James A. Fitzgerald, *The Teaching of Spelling* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1951), pp. 1-10.

<sup>3</sup>See Ernest Horn, "Spelling," *Encyclopedia of Educational Research*, revised edition, 1950, pp. 1249-54.

learning and which informs him of success when he has mastered a word, he will most generally succeed in learning to spell. If he finds that the time and effort he gives to spelling are rewarded with success, he will develop independence by following this program and by using the dictionary effectively.

### *The Incidental Method of Learning*

Alert children learn to spell many words incidentally as they are met in reading, study, and writing in and out of school. Such learning has value and accounts for a high proportion of the words needed by some children in writing; for other children the help achieved incidentally is not so great. No teacher can afford to relegate the mastery of spelling solely to incidental learning, but every teacher must accept it as an important aid in teaching spelling. It is seldom that there are not great differences among children of a group in the ability to spell a list of words. It often happens that a child may know how to spell many of the words assigned in a spelling unit or even in a semester's program. To force that child to study the spelling of these words would be a deadening procedure for him. Unless each child's incidental learning is appraised and a plan of administration is put into practice which utilizes his knowledge and accommodates his needs, time will be wasted in studying words he knows or does not need. Accordingly, the child's spelling must be evaluated in the beginning and throughout the term so that his spelling work will begin where his incidental learning stops.

### *Teaching the Method of Learning to Spell a Word*

The first step in teaching spelling is to present words the child needs to write and cannot spell. The second is to teach him an effective method of learning to spell a word. Gates, Blanchard, and others have emphasized the point that spelling failure is caused by the lack of an efficient method of learning to spell.<sup>5</sup> Horn emphasized the significance of teaching a

child an effective method of learning to spell and stressed the importance of using time in the first lessons each year to insure proper methods of learning.<sup>6</sup> He stressed the greater value of a teacher-directed method compared to the less economical methods which children use when left to themselves.<sup>7</sup> A perusal of spelling textbooks and workbooks shows variations in presenting a method of learning to spell a word; nor have the authorities in the field agreed on the exact steps of learning. Breed found that six prominent authorities recommended 34 activities for teaching the spelling of words and classified them into the following: "seeing the word, hearing its pronunciation, pronouncing it, using it in a sentence, visualizing it, spelling it, focusing attention on its difficult parts, and writing it."<sup>8</sup>

The agreements and disagreements of authorities on methods of learning to spell cannot be presented in this article, but to help the child master an effective method of learning to spell, the following three fundamental phases of instruction are suggested: 1) the approach, 2) the active learning of the spelling, and 3) the use of the word.<sup>9</sup>

### *The approach to learning to spell a word. A*

<sup>5</sup>Arthur I. Gates, "An Experimental Comparison of the Study-Test and Test-Study Methods in Spelling," *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 22:1-19, January, 1931. See Sister M. Gervase Blanchard, "An Experimental Comparison of the Test-Study and the Study-Test Methods of Teaching Spelling in the Eighth Grade," (unpublished Master's thesis, Fordham University, New York, 1944), p. 91.

<sup>6</sup>Ernest Horn, "Principles of Method in Teaching Spelling as Derived from Scientific Investigations," *Eighteenth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education*, Part II, 1919, pp. 70-71.

<sup>7</sup>*Loc. cit.*

<sup>8</sup>Frederick S. Breed, *How to Teach Spelling* (Dansville, New York: F. A. Owen Publishing Company, 1930), pp. 59-60.

<sup>9</sup>Fitzgerald, *The Teaching of Spelling, op cit.*, pp. 216 ff.



good approach comprises use, meaning, and pronunciation. Before a child will want to write a word he must know at least one meaning of the word. To ascertain whether a child has acquired a meaning of the word, he may be challenged with a story containing the word, a matching exercise which includes the word, or a discussion which utilizes the word. It may be noted whether the child pronounces the word correctly. In appraising the child's pronunciation of the word, a teacher may listen to the child pronounce the word. If the word is mispronounced, the child may, depending upon his level, either use the dictionary in determining the correct pronunciation or pronounce it after the teacher has pronounced it.

*The active steps of learning to spell a word.* The active steps of learning to spell a word are four: 1. Imagery, 2. Recall, 3. Writing the word, and 4. Mastery of the spelling of the word.

1. *Imagery.* While authorities agree that a child must form an image of the word, they are not agreed upon the manner of presentation of the word so that the child may image it. Fernald suggested that there are great differences among individuals in imagery and suggested that teacher and child should cooperate in discovering the best method of learning to spell a word.<sup>10</sup> Children may use two or three types of imagery in learning to spell a word.<sup>11</sup> Since the determination of the type of imagery which each child prefers would be a gargantuan task for a teacher of thirty-five children, it is suggested that a word be presented in writing or in print so that the child may visualize it. It may be pronounced so that the child can listen to it. It may be pronounced by the child as a whole word, also in syllables, and again as a whole word.<sup>12</sup> The child may write the word to aid mastery. A kinesthetic approach may be emphasized for some children particularly in the case of words difficult for them.<sup>13</sup> Most children will be helped to image a word properly by using more than one aid to imagery rather

than by only one to the exclusion of all others. A clear image of the word by one or more of the visual, auditory, oral, and kinesthetic approaches are necessary to learning to spell.

2. *Recall.* Recall is a check upon imagery. The child may cover the word to find whether he can visualize it as a whole and in syllables. The child may cover the word to note whether he can recall the sequence of letters of the word. He should determine whether he can write the word from memory. If a child fails to recall the spelling of the word, he should analyze it further in order to fix the correct image; he should then try to recall the word, visually, orally, and in writing.

3. *Writing the word.* Proof of the learning of the spelling of a word is the correct writing of the word. After a child has written the word from memory, he should check the spelling to determine whether he has written the letters legibly in their proper sequence. The legible writing of the word should be stressed, for an illegible word may have worse consequences than a misspelled word.

4. *Mastery of the spelling of the word.* One successful writing of the word is not sufficient proof of its mastery by a child. After a child has succeeded in writing the word correctly from memory, he should cover the word and write it again. He should check this second writing, and if it is correct, the ordinary child will benefit by covering the word and writing it once more. If this spelling is correct, he may assume that he has learned to spell the word. If an error has been made, the child should be

<sup>10</sup>Grace M. Fernald, *Remedial Techniques in Basic School Subjects* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company Inc., 1943), p. 182.

<sup>11</sup>Horn, *loc. cit.*

<sup>12</sup>For an excellent investigation on syllabic presentation see Thomas D. Horn, "Learning to Spell as Affected by Syllabic Presentation of Words," *Elementary School Journal*, 49:263-272, January, 1949.

<sup>13</sup>See the discussion by Fernald, *op. cit.*, pp. 181-210.



taught to try again to master the word by means of a more careful application of these five steps.

*The use of the word in writing.* Since a child should learn to spell only the words he needs to write, he should write the words he learns to spell. It is not enough to be able to spell a word orally, or to write it correctly in a final or review test; the word should be written correctly in all situations that call for its writing. A child should appraise his spelling of all words, particularly of new words which have been difficult for him, and correct all errors in his written work. Such appraisal should of course be supervised by the teacher. In the case of a child who is severely retarded in spelling the teacher will find it necessary sometimes to correct the spelling in his written work in order to direct his attention and efforts to learning to spell the words needed by him.

*A résumé of the process of teaching a child to learn to spell a word.*

This method of guidance, which has helped many children to learn to spell, is summarized as follows:

- a) Have the child approach spelling of a word through use, understanding, and pronunciation.
- b) Guide the child to follow active steps of learning to spell a word:
  - (1) The child should develop a clear image of the word.
  - (2) The child should recall the spelling of the word.
  - (3) The child should write the word carefully and neatly.
  - (4) The child should check the spelling and master the writing of the word.
- c) The word should be used frequently in writing.<sup>14</sup>

These suggestions may be used by the child in *Five Steps of Learning to Spell a Word*:

1. *Meaning and pronunciation.* Look at the word. Pronounce the word. Use the word correctly in a sentence.

2. *Imagery.* See and say the word. See the syllables of the word. Say the word, syllable by syllable. Spell the word.

3. *Recall.* Look at the word. Close your eyes and spell it. Check to see whether your spelling is correct. (In case you made an error, do steps 1, 2, and 3 again.)

4. *Writing the word.* Write the word correctly. Dot the *i*'s. Cross the *t*'s. Close the *o*'s. Check your writing to see that every letter is legible. Check your spelling.

5. *Mastery.* Cover the word and write it. If it is correct, cover the word and write it again. If it is correct, cover it and write it once more.<sup>15</sup>

### *The Test-Study Versus the Study-Test Procedure*

Two methods, the test-study and the study-test, have been developed for the teaching of spelling. In brief, the principle of the test-study method is to test a group of children on the words assigned for the week in order that each child may study the words he misspelled. In the study-test method, children study the assignment of words before being tested. The findings of investigations which have been made to determine the comparative effectiveness of the two methods do not agree perfectly. However, the results of a majority of studies favor the test-study procedure. To say the least, the test-study procedure seems logically to be more advantageous when children in a group know a considerable number of words in an assignment.

Some authorities favor the study-test procedure particularly with a group in the primary grades who know none or very few of the words to be taught. A teacher who knows the abilities and achievement of children of her group will know which method to use. She may ascertain the achievement in spelling by testing, and from its results select the best procedure to follow.

<sup>14</sup>Fitzgerald, *The Teaching of Spelling*, op. cit., p. 220.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 38.

The teacher may give a preliminary-term test, made up from a representative sample of the words selected for the term, to determine the general level of the class and to ascertain something of the spelling ability of each member of the class. Some children will know how to spell more words than others; if most of the children know how to spell several of the words, and all of them know the spelling of some words, the teacher may conclude that the test-study procedure should be effective.

### *The Test-Study Procedure*

*The essential points in the test-study procedure.* The important points in the test-study procedure are: 1) Pretest on the weekly assignment. 2) Direct the attention of each child to words he misspelled in the weekly pretest. 3) Each child studies the words he misspelled in the pretest. 4) Each child should be encouraged to use in his written work the words he learns to spell. 5) Give a final test to determine the degree of mastery by each child of the week's words. 6) Each child keeps a chart of his progress from week to week. 7) Each child writes in a hard-word list the words he misspells often. 8) Each child studies each difficult word with the five steps, and takes a review test two weeks later on these words. 9) The mastery of the words misspelled in the final test each week is made the individual responsibility of each child. 10) Each child completes all spelling activities and exercises neatly and correctly. 11) The final test at the end of the term shows the accomplishment and progress of the class as a whole and of each child. 12) In all spelling activities, child interest and enthusiasm must be developed and maintained.

*A test-study weekly program.* Although the test-study plan of instruction may be administered on a weekly, a monthly, or a semester basis, the weekly plan is the most common form of program. A weekly assignment of from seven to 20 words per week depending upon the

level is sufficient to teach a basic list of 3500 words to children in the elementary school.

A time allotment of 75 minutes a week may be apportioned in one of several ways: 1) 15 minutes a day, five days a week; 2) 25 minutes a day, three times a week; 3) from 35 to 40 minutes a day, twice a week; or 4) the whole 75 minutes on one day to suit the schedule and the needs of the children.

The following is a summary of the weekly schedule of five days utilizing fifteen minutes a day:

A. *Monday:* 1. The assignment of new words of the week and the review words of two weeks ago should be clear to all children. 2. Each child studies the meaning of the words of the assignment. 3. Each child learns the correct pronunciation of words. 4. The preliminary test of the week is administered to help each child determine the words he cannot spell. 5. Each child writes the words he misspelled in the pretest legibly in his note book or workbook. These are his "study words" for the week.

B. *Tuesday:* 1. Each child studies the words he misspelled in the pretest of the week with the *five steps of learning to spell a word*. 2. The teacher must guide all children to use the five steps efficiently. 3. The new words of the week should be used in exercises provided in a workbook and in other writing activities.

C. *Wednesday:* 1. Each child completes the study of his "study words" of the week. 2. Each child studies with the *five steps of learning to spell a word* his hard words—the words he misspelled in the final test of the week two weeks ago—if any. Children should be guided to study meanings and use words of the new and review assignments in activities suggested in a good text or workbook.

D. *Thursday:* 1. The final test of the week is administered on the new words of the week and the review words—words in the assignment of two weeks ago. 2. Checking and grading of

the papers must be accurate. 3. The words misspelled in this final test are written legibly in the child's hard-word list and studied carefully with the five steps. 4. The child checks off the hard words of two weeks ago which he spelled correctly in this final test. 5. A child who misspelled a hard word of two weeks ago should study it with the five steps until a special test requested by the child, and given by the teacher, indicates his mastery of the word.

E. *Friday*: 1. Each child records his score on his individual progress chart. 2. Each should complete the mastery of any words misspelled in the final test of the week. 3. Each completes any unfinished business of the week: learns to spell demons; uses words in exercises; writes original stories, letters, or sentences which require new words.<sup>16</sup>

*Variation of the test-study plan.* The above plan requires a conventional test on two days of the week. Another test-study program which has been used in many systems provides for testing on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, and individual study under supervision on Tuesday and Thursday.<sup>17</sup> Research indicates that whether two tests or three tests are administered weekly, the differences in results are insignificant. The important factors are: pretesting to determine which of the assigned words each child needs to study individually; study of the words he does not know; testing to guide each child to the mastery of the words he needs to learn; and testing to know when mastery has been accomplished.

### *The Study-Test Plan of Teaching*

The study-test plan of teaching may be used in the beginning if the children of a class know how to spell none or only a small percentage of the assigned words. If a preliminary-term test has indicated that the children knew none or very few of the words of the term, it would be unnecessary to administer a pretest each week before teaching. In this case, it would be necessary to teach the children how

to spell, and the daily type of assignment would in all likelihood be most appropriate. A workable study-test plan of instruction is based upon the assignment of a few words—perhaps only two or three—a day. The phases in this type of procedure include: 1) Meaning and pronunciation, 2) imagery, 3) writing the word, 4) recall, 5) testing, 6) motivation, and 7) individual study and use of words.

1) Teacher and children pronounce the word. The teacher guides each child to correct understanding of word meaning and to proper pronunciation by using the word in a sentence and having the child use it in a sentence.

2) Next, the teacher pronounces the word. She may write the word, saying each letter as she writes. The child analyzes the word and obtains an image of it through active study.

3) The child writes the word to strengthen his image and to check its correctness.

4) The child recalls the image of the word, and the letters in sequence; he writes the word from memory. Writing must be checked for accuracy by the child under teacher supervision.

5) After the words of the day have been taught, a test on the day's two or three words and on the words of the day before may be administered.

6) The work particularly on the level which requires a study-test method must be carried on enthusiastically. Among the motivating exercises helpful in teaching the slow are flash card drills, solving puzzles, rhyming words, playing games, making charts and posters, and writing words in sentences and stories.

7) Since no child should be made to study the spelling of a word which he already knows, the teacher should be alert to note progress of individual children in learning to spell. When the group has progressed to the point where

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 41-47.

<sup>17</sup>Ernest Horn, "Spelling," *Encyclopedia of Educational Research*, 1941, p. 1175.

children know some of the words of the assignment before teaching, the teacher will pretest them in the beginning of the week in order that each child may record the words he does not know and must learn to spell.

A child will be encouraged when he discovers that he can spell correctly some of the words of the assignment. He will be encouraged more when he finds out that he needs to study only the words he cannot spell. He will be encouraged greatly when he discovers that he can make progress by using the *five steps of learning to spell a word*. He will be encouraged further when he finds the words he has studied useful in his written work.

### *Independence through Individual Study*

The spelling problems of one child differ from those of others because children vary in experiences, abilities, needs, difficulties, interests, attitudes, and development. To prepare a child to spell the words he needs when he needs them throughout life is a challenge to the

teachers of this generation. The following is a summary of the important principles which may serve to help meet this challenge.

A child should learn to spell a valid core of words which he needs in writing. A child must master an efficient method of learning to spell a word. A child must learn to attack his own individual problems in spelling. He must develop a desire to spell all words correctly in his written expression. He must develop an appraisal technique which tells him whether the spelling of a word is correct. He should learn to use the dictionary to determine the correctness of his spelling of a word and the propriety of his choice of a word for the expression of his thought. He should learn to be critical of his own writing so that, by proofreading and revision, his written expression may be an efficient tool for communication. These practices may be enhanced by developing word power through study of word forms and the practice of generalizations. They may be enhanced further by the development of understanding of words and by the use of words in writing.

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## *A Functional Handwriting Program*

MARY T. SULLIVAN<sup>1</sup>

Research indicates that, despite the wide use of the typewriter, we are doing today more handwriting than ever before in the process of everyday living. Writing is definitely an important skill the fine development of which will pay large dividends in personal and social values. The acquisition of this skill, however, must be regarded not for its own sake but as a means to an end; that end being the communication of one's thoughts to others through the medium of the printed word.

While the importance of writing legibly has not diminished, significant changes in instructional procedures have developed because of our

changing viewpoints in the philosophy of education. The stress is now placed upon the functional aspect of this important skill. No longer do we use an outmoded approach to our handwriting program. We have questioned the value of isolated drills, formality and rigidity in letter formation, and emphasis upon a specific arm movement. Now we are not trying to produce a generation of calligraphers. We are well-satisfied with writers whose efforts are characterized by a suitable degree of legibility and neatness.

Before suggesting possible ways of developing a functional handwriting program, the <sup>1</sup>Vice principal in charge of the David A. Ellis School, Roxbury, Mass.



writer would like to examine some of the objectives and basic principles with which the teacher should be concerned. The over-all, primary goal should be to provide for the formation of right habits and skills which will give a ready and effective manner of expressing thought through the use of the written symbol. Subsidiary objectives might be listed as follows:

1. To foster a desire to write legibly.
2. To develop an understanding of the need for purposeful, systematic practice periods.
3. To develop the ability to write automatically; that is, without undue concentration upon the features of letters, slant, spacing, etc.
4. To develop right habits of posture so as to eliminate fatigue and tension.

In order to realize the above-mentioned objectives, certain principles of child development must be observed. Each of these principles will be discussed in some detail as we proceed with our exposition. However, it seems advisable to include them at this point in order to guide us in our thinking.

1. Consideration must be given to the developmental periods in the child's pattern of growth. This would presuppose a readiness program plus the transitional periods needed to allow for continuous but gradual development.

2. An interest in writing and a desire to write must be aroused by the teacher. Numerous opportunities for fostering this interest may arise in the classroom. The application of the handwriting skill to meaningful situations will help to sustain the interest.

3. Recognition must be made of the variations in ability found within the class. The program in handwriting must make the adaptations needed to meet these individual differences.

4. Provision must be made for meaningful

practice to help in the improvement of the quality and rate of the handwriting product.

5. The problem of the left-handed child must be solved.

6. The importance of evaluation by the teacher and the pupil must be recognized.

Just as all children are not ready to walk at the same chronological age, so all children are not ready to write at the same age. On entering first grade, many of our children do indicate that they have the necessary background and equipment to begin to learn to write. Other children will very definitely require a longer readiness period. On the one hand, we have the child who scribbles attentively, and then, with unquestioned skill, proudly "reads" back what he has "written." Then, again, we have the child with limited experience coupled perhaps with poor muscular coordination who needs a more intensive preparatory program. The teacher must not force him into the formation of letters too soon since this action may have a disastrous effect upon him. In the first place, he will probably make little progress; and, in the second place, the teacher can conceivably create within the child an emotional disturbance which will poorly repay her for any little progress he may have made.

When the child first comes to school, he has little genuine need for written communication. He expresses himself orally and, on certain occasions, he uses the teacher as his scribe. Far more important than teaching him in a formal writing period at this stage is the aid the teacher can give him by way of preparation. An understanding of the value of handwriting and the fostering of a desire to learn to write are of paramount importance. Let him see how writing can serve his simple purposes. Letters received at school may be shared with him. A previous visitor to the building may have sent a letter thanking the children for the hospitality he has received. The principal may have sent a notice to the children extending his best



wishes for a pleasant Christmas vacation. Invitations may be sent to Mother asking her to attend the first grade Mothers' Meeting held early in the school year. Here, although the teacher acts as secretary and reader, the child is beginning to acquire a realization of the value of those strokes upon the page—"talk written down." The teacher may encourage the child to bring to school the letter he received from his grandmother thus enabling all the children to share this experience.

The recognition of signs and labels in the classroom or elsewhere and the child's natural curiosity as to the significance of the symbols thereon may aid in writing readiness, as well as in reading readiness. The child in our kindergarten who went home from school on his first day with a tag bearing his name and questioned his mother, "Does this tag say how much I cost?" was exhibiting an interest in writing in addition to an interest in reading. The successful teacher will observe these indications of the stage of development of writing readiness and, where she believes it necessary to do so, will provide for experiences to further develop this preliminary period.

The child must be helped to make the proper adjustment to the group and to the teacher as a member of the group. He must be guided so as to express himself well orally since this is a prerequisite for later good written expression. The teacher can call the child's attention to the left to right sequence emphasizing this as she records the class experiences. She might even direct their attention to the spaces she has left between the words as she writes. The use of experience charts used in beginning reading, prepared by children and teacher, is also an excellent way of developing the writing readiness so essential to achieve success in this school subject.

Another phase of the readiness program concerns itself with the development of muscular coordination needed in writing. Here, also, the kindergarten training is very valuable. All

phases of construction activities, coloring, lettering, modelling with clay or plasticine, and easel painting tend to foster the manipulative and motor skills calculated to advance the child's readiness for writing. Various forms of physical education, likewise, help—ball playing, rhythm plays, and bodily responses to music. Even stick or line drawings done with large pencils or crayons may be beneficial if not done too often. The illustration of stories or experiences tends to develop the understandings needed for a writing background and it helps, too, in the promotion of the needed muscular coordination.

As the child begins to leave the readiness stage, we introduce him to more formal writing instruction. Here it is very important to recognize the fact that his writing must have meaning and purpose for him. Usually the first work after the readiness period is blackboard or easel work. This serves a two-fold purpose. It calls for the exercise of only the large muscles and it gives the teacher the opportunity to supervise the child's work more closely, thus preventing the formation of incorrect habits. All writing at the initial stage is done from models which are clearly displayed for the child's use. In the case of some children, the period of blackboard writing may be extended for several weeks. Often the child's own name may be the unit of practice. This skill once attained may be used to identify the crayon box of each child. Or it may be that he is practicing his name so as to write it on an invitation to be sent home to his mother asking her to attend the Christmas party at school. Simple words or phrases needed to carry on an activity in the classroom may be utilized for drill purposes. Daily short practice periods should be provided. At the first sign of fatigue, the period should be brought to a close.

The transition from the blackboard or easel to paper is once again determined by the individual progress of each child. Large pencils are given to the members of the class. Small

pencils, it is contended, encourage cramping with its resultant fatigue.

Probably most of us will agree that manuscript writing has definite advantages over cursive writing at the primary school level:

1. Manuscript writing of children is usually more legible than the cursive writing of children.
2. The use of manuscript writing tends to facilitate the learning of reading since the printed form is similar to the manuscript form.
3. Manuscript writing is easier for the child since it consists of simple curves and straight lines with no connecting strokes.
4. Research shows that children tend to write more letters since they feel more power and satisfaction in writing when using the manuscript form.
5. Manuscript writing seems to be as easy to learn for the left-handed child as for the right-handed child.
6. Research shows that manuscript writing tends to make for greater accuracy in spelling since the child is reproducing the form as he sees it in reading.
7. Authorities in the physical education field tell us that manuscript writing tends to build good posture since the writing is done in a vertical rather than in a slanting direction.

Probably the most valuable contribution that the first grade teacher can make to the child's handwriting achievement is to give him a feeling of success from the beginning. She can do this by giving him work well within his power to accomplish, by giving him individual help and guidance where it is needed, by eliminating strain and tension where possible, and by keeping his work meaningful and purposeful. She must utilize for practice reasons words that are high in interest value and chosen, too, for their frequency of use as certified by the best-known authorities in this field.

Toward the end of the third grade seems to be the usual time when the shift is made from manuscript to cursive writing. However, here too, calling upon our basic principle embodying the theory of individual differences, we can formulate no hard and fast rule as regards the time for making this change. The time of the transitional period depends largely upon the individual's control of the manuscript form, his desire to change to the cursive form, and his ability to learn the techniques of the new form. In any event, the change must be effected gradually. He may learn the cursive form but not employ it regularly for a period of a few months following this learning. He may use both forms for a time and may very well continue to use the manuscript form in adult life in situations where it may prove valuable. If the teacher in presenting the cursive form first teaches those letters which most closely resemble their namesakes in manuscript form, it tends to minimize her instructional problems. Then, too, the teacher must be mindful of an additional difficulty in the teaching of the cursive form, namely, the ability to "read writing."

As the child goes on to the intermediate grades, he meets many situations involving writing activities. In order to help the child to use his handwriting ability to good advantage in written communication, the teacher should arrange for periods of meaningful, well-motivated drill. It is during these middle grades that a definite plan to promote ease and speed in this tool subject must be formulated and carried out.

Standardized tests in the form of handwriting scales might well be given to ascertain the ability of the members of one's class. On the basis of these findings plus the teacher's judgment, arrangements can be made to meet the needs of the individual pupil. The excellent penman will probably need little practice, only sufficient to maintain the standards proper for him. His time may well be devoted to actual

purposeful writing activity. The child who is judged to be a fair writer will undoubtedly profit by carefully planned practice periods. His individual problems must be noted and specific attacks made upon his difficulties. The poor writer will need a more extended diagnostic and corrective plan. With him, it may be a question of incorrect letter formation, improper slant, or poor spacing of letters, words, or sentences. Perhaps the use of a check list similar to the one below may bring about the desired improvement.

1. Are the letters too sharp at the top?
2. Am I crowding the letters?
3. Am I making the loops too long?
4. Am I failing to close letters?
5. Am I breaking words?
6. Am I crowding words?
7. Am I crowding lines?

Adapted from

*Handbook of English for Boys and Girls*,  
edited by KIBBE, LABRANT, AND POOLEY.

Needless to say, the child should be given assistance in determining the nature of the illegibilities in his writing. Models must be supplied for him to use as a standard to which he may aspire. Once the errors have been particularized, a procedure for stamping out these errors must be established. A study of the accepted form should be made. Notice must be taken of how the child's work deviates from the correct form. Suggestions should be given as to the proper corrective measures to follow in eliminating the difficulty. Perhaps it is observed that the beginning stroke should be modified or that the connecting stroke should be changed. Following an attentive period of study, the child may rewrite the letter or the word and compare his new attempt with the model. A critical self-appraisal should follow and, if need be, further practice should be suggested. In the last analysis, however, the ability to write the letter or the word legibly in the applied work is the criterion by which to judge the effectiveness of the drill period.

In setting up a program for the improvement of handwriting, it is helpful to have some method whereby the child may check his own progress. In the elementary grades, a simple but effective device is to arrange to have each child keep a folder containing samples of his writing collected at intervals during the year. Certainly if the teacher has done her work well, notable progress can be seen in the work of most of her pupils. Sometimes a pair of papers done by the same child might be put on display—one paper done early in the term and the second, a more recent paper, placed beside the first to show the value of attentive, systematic practice.

Tidyman and Butterfield suggest that the teacher make a crude scale using for her standards papers collected at a specific grade level over a period of years. These papers might be roughly classified as unsatisfactory, satisfactory, and better than satisfactory. Pockets might be prepared for filing children's papers beneath the appropriate standard. Children might judge their own performance and file their papers accordingly, allowing the teacher the privilege of checking the papers from time to time to see if they have been carefully rated.

While it is axiomatic that we must have specific systematic handwriting practice as noted above, yet we must concede that the crux of the functional writing program is found in purposeful activity. The child must have a genuine problem, something to write and a reason for writing it. Handwriting becomes a basic tool in the conducting of a unitary program in the classroom. As in other fields of endeavor, a definite goal motivates the program and furnishes the drive needed for accomplishment. Of course, the situation out of which meaningful practice is to appear may be devised by the teacher on occasion. A complete list of purposeful school experiences to be used in a developmental handwriting program is unnecessary at this point, but a partial listing might serve as a referral point in the functional program.

***Primary School Level***

1. Writing names, addresses
2. Writing signs, labels
3. Preparing place cards for a school party
4. Writing simple letters
5. Writing captions for pictures
6. Preparing plans for class activities
7. Compiling news items for class newspaper
8. Listing books, songs, poems
9. Listing words used in unit
10. Writing holiday greetings on cards
11. Listing supplies needed to carry on science experiment
12. Listing children's names for daily duties
13. Writing program for class performance

***Intermediate School Level***

(In addition to above)

1. Writing business letters asking for materials to further unit work
2. Copying directions
3. Writing friendly letters of cheer, sympathy, etc.
4. Writing captions for posters
5. Preparing questions to be asked at interviews
6. Preparing material for class magazine
7. Writing minutes of meetings
8. Writing original stories and poems
9. Writing book reviews
10. Writing entries in diary
11. Writing reports
12. Writing logs based on class activities
13. Taking notes
14. Writing recipes for Mother's file

A few notable trends and problems may now be examined. First, what shall we do about

the left-handed child? This problem is mainly a primary school one since it is at that level that handedness is usually established. Most authorities agree that the kindergarten or first grade teacher should be alerted to this problem, should decide on the hand preference in each case after careful observation, and should provide the proper learning experiences to meet the needs of both the right-handed and left-handed child. The latter needs sympathetic handling, living as he does in a right-handed world. He must be shown the hand and arm positions that are correct for him. The teacher must remember that neatness and legibility, not hand preference, are the criteria by which to judge the worth of the writing product.

As suggested, less emphasis is now being placed upon the mechanical features of the writing program. The placing of the paper, the proper posture, the correct holding of the pen or pencil are subordinated to the primary consideration of legible writing in a meaningful situation.

As suggested, less emphasis is now being placed upon the pen in the elementary school, Macomber gives an unequivocal, "Yes," pointing out that the child generally uses this type of writing implement outside of school and certainly the adult makes use of the fountain pen.

In conclusion, may we say that it looks as though handwriting is here to stay! Employers still want good penmen. Applicants for positions are frequently asked to give their qualifications in their own handwriting. One still uses writing in signing checks and legal documents. It is still considered discourteous to use a mechanical device for preparing one's friendly letters. Therefore, may we not assume that to meet the requirements of the complex society to which we belong we must plan regular and purposeful practice periods in handwriting to equip the child for his daily living.



# Functional Phonetics for Power in Reading

ANNA D. CORDTS<sup>1</sup>

The teaching of phonics after having been in disrepute, seems to have regained its former good standing in the schools. Children are again being taught that *run*, *red* and *read* all begin with the sound of (er) exactly as they were forty years ago. One hears again the old refrain: er-run, *run*; er-ed, *red*; er-ead, *read*. The sound of *d* is called (du); *b*, (bu); *c*, (cu); and *g*, (gu). So it's du-og, *dog*; bu-ack, *back*; cu-ake, *cake*; and gu-oose, *goose*; nowhere else in the world, but in the primary grades of many of our schools.

When seven year old Phillips S. came suddenly upon a name he had not seen before, he said with boyish boldness, "I'll sound it out; uh-ber-uh-hu-uh-am. Abraham! Abraham Lincoln, that's it! Abraham Lincoln!"

Would anyone contend it was Phillip's phonics, or was it more likely his 143 I.Q. that came to the rescue?

When I ask first grade teachers why they persist in teaching the sounds incorrectly, or why they teach their pupils to "sound out" the words at all, they tell me (a) they didn't know their way was wrong; and (b) they have always considered phonics a valuable aid in learning to read. When I ask intermediate and upper grade teachers to explain their pupils' inability to handle the reading vocabulary intelligently, they say the children don't know their phonics. They haven't the vaguest idea how to attack a new word.

Let a teacher address a group of parents on any of the school's activities, and someone in the audience will not fail to ask: "Why is it that the children aren't learning to read?" And then: "Why don't the schools teach phonics the way they used to?"

Most parents look to phonics as the panacea

for their children's reading ills; and when Jack can't read well enough to get his lessons it must be because he hasn't learned to sound out the new words he meets on the printed page. To tell these parents that their children *are* learning the sounds of the letters leaves them confounded in their confusion and their children still unable to handle the reading vocabulary.

Several years ago a study was made to determine (a) the relative frequency of occurrence of the phonetic elements in the primary reading vocabulary; and (b) the various phonetic combinations and their frequency of occurrence in the primary reading vocabulary. This study, contained within the field of the science of phonetics, was followed by experimental research with children in the first, second, and third grades to determine (a) the order in which the phonetic units should be taught; and (b) how they should be taught as a means of word recognition in reading.

These studies terminated in a simple, non-sounding technic for identifying new words in reading. By this means 86.4% of all the words in the children's reading vocabulary may be identified, leaving 13.6% to be remembered by their form or configuration.

The technic employs 85 known words called cue words, since they provide the cues for identifying the reading vocabulary. Each word yields one cue, and one cue only. One of these is (sa) learned from the cue word *sand*; and recognized in *saddle*; *salad*; *sap*; *salary*; *sack*; *salmon*; *Sally*; *sandals*; *sacrifice*; *Saturday*; *satisfied*; in all the words in which the cue occurs.

Another cue is the ending (t) in *goat*. By blending (sa) and (t) the pupil knows the word *sat* and *for all time*. If he forgets it (a

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likely assumption) he can get it again from his cue words without anyone's help. Having once identified it by its known parts he can do it again as often as necessary.

Moreover, the pupil now knows the most significant syllable in *Saturday*; and *satisfied*; and in *Saturn*, an important name in elementary science. If he also knows the word *day* the context will take him the rest of the way to *Saturday*. And if he knows the word, *is*, he can identify *satisfied*, as six year old Joe did when he read from the board: "Billy said, 'I am satisfied'."

"I knew *sat is*," Joe explained, "and then I got *satisfied*."

And so that's how Joe, too was satisfied.

Thus by knowing, not only the whole words, *sand* and *goat*, but also their cues (*sa*) and (*t*) the pupil is able to extend his knowledge and experience to many other words. In some instances as many as fifty new words can be identified by means of a single additional cue. But most important of all the pupil is learning to use a successful means of identifying the new words he is sure to meet in his reading.

It is significant to note that identifying a new word by this technic is not unlike that of reading a new sentence. That is, the pupil recognizes a new word by its known parts in the same way that he reads a new sentence made up of known parts, or words. Since reading comes first, and word analysis later, the children are not learning a new method so much as applying an accustomed procedure to a new situation. And carrying the analogy still further, it would be as unthinkable for a reader to sound a new word as it would be to sound out a sentence.

Experimental data showed conclusively that when new words are identified by their known parts there is no loss in comprehension when a new word is encountered. Since the new word is but an aggregate of known parts the reader takes it in his stride while reading, without

losing the thread of the thought, thus maintaining comprehension throughout the reading process.

Comprehension, of course, is not a single skill, but a composite of many abilities; and while it is dependent upon intelligence and a background of experiences, it is influenced by good and poor methods of reading, including the ways and means of attacking new words. If the reader has to stop to sound a word, or wait for someone to tell it to him, he can hardly be expected, at the same time, to understand what he is reading.

The cues required for independent word recognition are presented here in their cue words, and in the order in which they can most readily be learned, based on (a) the phonetic nature of the cues; (b) the relative frequency of occurrence of the units (or cues) in the primary reading vocabulary; and (c) the relative ease, or difficulty in learning the cues.<sup>2</sup>

#### The "Short a" Beginning Cues

|             |               |             |
|-------------|---------------|-------------|
| <i>sand</i> | <i>cats</i>   | <i>bats</i> |
| <i>bags</i> | <i>rabbit</i> | <i>lamp</i> |

#### The First Ten Ending Cues

|              |              |              |             |              |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| <i>goat</i>  | <i>truck</i> | <i>watch</i> | <i>dog</i>  | <i>drum</i>  |
| <i>clown</i> | <i>sled</i>  | <i>sheep</i> | <i>bell</i> | <i>chief</i> |

#### The "Short i" Beginning Cues

|               |                |                |
|---------------|----------------|----------------|
| <i>dishes</i> | <i>pig</i>     | <i>chicks</i>  |
| <i>window</i> | <i>kittens</i> | <i>whistle</i> |

#### The "Short u" Beginning Cues

|             |               |
|-------------|---------------|
| <i>bus</i>  | <i>ducks</i>  |
| <i>jugs</i> | <i>hunter</i> |

#### The "Short e" Beginning Cues

|              |               |             |              |
|--------------|---------------|-------------|--------------|
| <i>bed</i>   | <i>letter</i> | <i>men</i>  | <i>nest</i>  |
| <i>seven</i> | <i>fence</i>  | <i>tent</i> | <i>shell</i> |

#### The "Short o" Beginning Cues

|               |               |
|---------------|---------------|
| <i>robins</i> | <i>pocket</i> |
|---------------|---------------|

<sup>2</sup>The cues may be presented in any known words in which they occur, but must never be taught in isolation.

**"Long Vowel" Cues**

|        |      |      |
|--------|------|------|
| bees   | gate | bone |
| leaves | kite | mule |

**The Last Five Ending Cues<sup>3</sup>**

|      |       |      |
|------|-------|------|
| cub  | prize | moth |
| fish | cave  |      |

**Other Beginning Cues**

|         |        |       |        |
|---------|--------|-------|--------|
| vase    | plane  | spade | grapes |
| thistle | slide  | crabs | bridge |
| stove   | blocks | dress | frog   |
| clock   | flag   | trees | swing  |

**The "Digraph" and Diphthong Cues**

|       |       |        |       |
|-------|-------|--------|-------|
| train | pie   | corn   | chair |
| tray  | suit  | barn   | house |
| boat  | goose | turkey | cow   |
| crow  | books | birds  | coins |
| fly   | saw   | ferns  | toys  |

**The Last Two Beginning Cues**

|       |      |
|-------|------|
| queen | yard |
|-------|------|

The following points should not be overlooked.

1. Any given letter may have several pronunciations, since the same letter is not always associated with the same sound. The letters *ea*, for example, are pronounced "long e" in *bead*; but "short e" in *bread*; "long e" in *mean*, but "short e" in *meant*. It was found, however, that the discrepancy between letters and sounds poses no problem when children are taught to read for meaning. Barbara E. illustrated this point when after having read the sentence: "But that was not what the man meant," informed her teacher: "I thought, at first, that the word was *mean-t* (mēnt). But that didn't make sense, so I knew it had to be *meant*."

The moral being: Teach children to use their heads! Only by their meaning in context can the correct pronunciation of words like the "There are no cues for the endings *s* and *ng*. Since the letter *s* so frequently represents the sound (x) it was found more practical to teach both voiced and voiceless endings as the plural forms of nouns. The ending *ng* has practical value only as it occurs with a vowel as in *ing*.

following be determined: *lead*, *read*, *row*, *bow*, *sow*. Many words in the children's reading depend upon their meaning, the manner in which they are used, for their pronunciation. This is true, whether with or without the benefit of word analysis technics.

2. Experiment showed that a pupil may know a word as a whole, and not know its parts. For example, he may recognize the word *sand* on sight, and not know the unit (sa) in *sand*. It follows, then, that children must be taught to recognize the units in their cue words. It may not be left to chance.

3. To recognize known parts in new words is a basic skill in learning to read. And to be skilled in any art, one must have practiced the art. Children usually do not enter school bringing their skills with them. They *have to learn* to read, to write, to organize their ideas in logical sequence, and to communicate courteously with one another. Every skill required for successful living and learning in school and in life outside of school must be practiced, if the skill is to function when needed. And being able to identify the new words in reading is not an exception to the rule.

When Janet B. age 6 years and 9 months met the word *caterpillar* for the first time, she explained how she had worked out the new word. "I saw *cater*"; she said, "and then I saw *cater pill*; and then I knew it was *caterpillar*."

How did Janet come to know the syllable (er)? From having met it again and again in words like *her*, *mother*, *father*, *water*, *farmer*. How did she know *pill*? "I got *pi* from *pig* and *ll* from *ball*" she told us, "and that made *pill*."

Janet might have gotten (pi) from *picture* or any other known word beginning with (pi). And she might have gotten (ll) from *bell* as well as *ball*. Janet's having learned through not one, but many experiences, *how* to help herself in identifying a new word, was able entirely on her own to meet the need when it arose.

A daily fifteen minute period will start the young learner on his way toward independence in reading, when the practice is purposeful, systematic, and phonetically as well as psychologically sound. Then when he begs his teacher, "Don't help me! I can work it out. I know it. I can read the whole thing!" he is experiencing not only the thrill of his power over the printed page but is well on his way toward becoming a

successful reader; able to cope with his basic readers; his science and health books; all his text and storybooks; and later his arithmetic problems; his history and geography or social science textbooks; all reading matter he has the intelligence to comprehend; and *under his own power*—a goal that means so much, and can be so easily and joyfully achieved, yet is so seldom realized in the elementary schools of our land.

## *At Home with the Retarded Reader*

DELWYN G. SCHUBERT<sup>1</sup>

The child's reading problem is frequently the problem of the home as much as it is that of the school. Research has linked a great number of factors in the home with reading disability. These include, for example: The cultural level of the home, neighborhood conditions, language spoken in the home, sibling relationships, and parent-child relationships. It is true that psychometrists have dozens of tests at their finger tips, but there is no test that can be used to find out about a child's life at home. Asking a child about his home and its conditions throws very little light on the situation. In the final analysis, home visitation is the best way for the teacher to learn about the home. If notes are sent to the parents, inviting them to visit the school, little is achieved. You seldom meet those parents whom you want most to see. There is only one answer. You must visit the retarded reader's home!

When planning a meeting with the parents follow these suggestions whenever possible:

1. Do not visit the home of the retarded reader if you are certain you are not wanted.

2. Plan your visit so that you can meet both parents.
3. If it is possible, include the child in the conference.
4. Allow the parents to decide on the time for the interview.
5. Be sympathetic and understanding and demonstrate a genuine interest in the child.
6. Confer with the child before you visit the home, making an effort to uncover problems which will help you orient the conference most profitably.
7. Do not fill out any questionnaires or record any information during your visit but make a mental note of all conditions which have a possible bearing on the child's reading problem.

This last suggestion requires amplification. Although it is unwise to record data in the presence of the parents, one should not allow a great deal of time or other visits to intervene before doing so. The

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frailty of the human memory is too notorious. In fact, it is advisable to have a form such as the following available in the car or office to which you return so that pertinent information can be recorded immediately after the conference.

### *Home Environment Report*

Check those which pertain; mark with a O those about which you are uninformed.

#### *Socio-economic status*

- .... The home is economically insecure.
- .... The parents speak a language or languages other than English.
- .... The parents cannot speak English.
- .... The parents do not read worthwhile books and magazines.
- .... The parents do not furnish the child with suitable books and magazines.
- .... The home provides little intellectual stimulation.
- .... The surrounding neighborhood is inadequate.

#### *Parent-child relationship*

- .... The parents are too harsh in their discipline.
- .... The parents are inconsistent in their discipline.
- .... The parents reject the child.

- .... The parents show an over-solicitous attitude toward the child.
- .... The parents show disappointment in the child because of his reading inability.
- .... The child is inadequately fed.
- .... The child gets inadequate rest.
- .... The child has no place to study.

#### *Sibling Relationship*

- .... The child has no brothers or sisters.
- .... The child is teased or bossed by his siblings.
- .... The child is compared unfavorably with his siblings.
- .... The child receives no help or encouragement from his siblings.

#### *Parent Relationship*

- .... There is dissension between the parents.
- .... The home is broken.
- .... Relatives live in the home.

Being at home with the retarded reader is a sure way to gain the kind of information needed to make adequate provision for his individual needs. And being at home with the parents is an excellent way to build the understanding and subsequent cooperation that is often the key to a child's reading disability.

## "Said," The Lazy Writer's Word

AMY J. DE MAY<sup>1</sup>

The reason why we who write lack style in what we write is because we do not use variety in our modes of expression. We employ the same words or phrases over and over until the effect is monotonous. Three words whose continuous repetition in almost every story I have read in the past year are *breathed*, *gulped* for swallowed, and *nostalgia* for longing memories of past experiences. I have read these so often in so many stories that when I see one of them it irritates me. Another word used too frequently in wrong meaning is *instinctively*; "She went closer instinctively." Could this writer know what *instinct* is? Psychologists list very few instinctive actions in human beings; for one person to go closer to another is not one of them.

As to *breathing*, only is a special sense where it would fit should such a word be used. Why should *breathe* be used in the following expressions which I have culled from three different stories?

"All right," he breathed.

"I'll be all right. I can manage," she breathed.

"It's too gorgeous to be real," she breathed.

This is a lazy way of substituting another word for *said*; and *said*, or a substitute, which we are obliged to use whenever dialogue is part of the written story and the speaker to be indicated is necessary. We write, "He said," "She said," "They said," or "said he," "said she," "said they," in our written conversation so continually that *said*, *said*, *said* is echoed over

and over in the reader's mind until the effect of the conversation is spoiled. Now and then we do vary our style a little by the use of *answered* and *cried* or some other easily thought of substitute.

There are great possibilities of rendering the same idea, possibilities probably greater than for the expression of any other one concept. If we wish to find out the variety and range of words accessible to phrase this single word meaning within the limits of even a short story we need but to carefully examine some of those written by our most successful writers of fiction and make a list of the appropriate words made to serve in place of our weary friend, *said*. We shall find that not only do the words chosen to take its place fit where they are put, but they tell more than *said* has the means of doing, because they mean more than mere assertion, letting the reader know the mood of the speaker without taking a whole sentence to do it.

How much more "'Worse!' snapped Kate," expresses than if the author had written "'Worse!' said Kate, or even "'Worse!' cried Kate in an angry tone. Or in the following: "No? Oh!" smiled Mrs. Howland. Can you not see Mrs. Howland smile at once as you get her mood? Suppose instead the author had written, "No, Oh no," answered Mrs. Howland," and she smiled as she said it."

"Crumbs," by Eleanor H. Porter, from which these quotations have been taken, is a short story of about three thousand words.

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The plot is carried forward mainly by conversation, forty different asserting words being employed in place of said, which is resorted to but four times in the entire story. Three other stories by this same author are excellent examples to examine for this same thing. "Axminster Path" uses forty-three to assert who was expressing himself, of which only five were say or said, with thirty-eight other ways of indicating the speaker. In "Phineas and the Motor Car" fifty-two such words are used with only six uses of say or said, making forty-six other words. In "Father and Mother Rebelled" out of seventy-four such expressions say or said are used but five times with sixty-nine other means for indicating who spoke. In addition the author has conveyed the said without any word at all in various parts of the story. Of this last, one has to be careful, because if the speaker is not indicated for more than two or three consecutive speeches the reader cannot keep track of who is speaking, and has to stop and reckon back to find out who is speaking, which is annoying and spoils the interest.

Suppose Miss Porter had used *said* each time in any of these stories! Think of the tired little words having to be written and read fifty-two times in one story of about three thousand words, and seventy-four times in another; or a like proportion in a shorter or longer piece of writing.

Of course when we apply other modes of expression in place of said we have to be more cautious than when we simply say "said," which will practically always fit anywhere. With such words as "observed" and "pursued," we must be sure they fit the context. In the beginning of a conver-

sation the speaker could not *pursue* it; but he might *observe*.

The variety in expression must seem to come as a matter of course, or otherwise it will appear strained. The effect cannot be produced without design on the part of the author. When reading these stories by Eleanor H. Porter for the story one is not aware of the diversity of vocabulary, aware only that the story grips you, shows you how the characters are feeling during the conversation, and this is what holds his interest. However great this author's mastery of vocabulary might be, certain it is that so many shades of meaning in this one form could not have been accidental. When one lists the many different words one is sure that she deliberately worked these terms into her story; and so cleverly that the general reader does not suspect how the trick was done. This is called the art of writing.

Below is a list of words that with proper handling can be substituted for *said*. There probably are many others. As will be noticed many of these are not *said* words at all but are related to some action which has taken place or some mental state which the conversation has opened up in the mind of the speaker. For this reason the writer must carefully examine the dialogue in relation to the action that is taking place and choose the asserting word that best expresses the speaker's mood and meaning. Only a lazy writer will use *said* continually because it will fit anywhere. To use other words in its place necessitates much careful study. And in the search for the right one, the author should not substitute long, bulky, or unusual words, as for example, asseverated,

whose meaning would be ideal in some situations but which would be out of place even so in any writing for the general reader.

|               |              |               |                      |            |              |
|---------------|--------------|---------------|----------------------|------------|--------------|
| acceded       | calling      | demonstrated  | fleered              | jabbered   | persisted    |
| accused       | came — reply | demurred      | floundered           | jeered     | persuaded    |
| acknowledged  | caroled      | denied        | flouted              | jerked out | pleaded      |
| acquiesced    | cat-called   | denoted       | frowned              | jested     | plodded on   |
| added         | caterwauled  | denounced     | fumbled              | jobed      | plotted      |
| admitted      | challenged   | derided       | gabbled              | joined in  | pointed      |
| admonished    | chanted      | differed      | gabbled              | joked      | pointed out  |
| advised       | chattered    | digressed     | gaped                | joshed     | pounded in   |
| affirmed      | cheered      | dilated       | gaspd                | kept on    | praised      |
| agreed        | chimed in    | directed      | <b>gave a scream</b> | kidded     | pretended    |
| answered      | chirped      | discriminated | gibbered             | kindled    | prevaricated |
| allowed       | chortled     | disputed      | giggled              | kowtowed   | proceeded    |
| amended       | chuckled     | dissented     | gloomed              | lamented   | proclaimed   |
| announced     | claimed      | dissuaded     | glowered             | lashed     | prodded      |
| apologized    | clamored     | dittoed       | grated               | lashed out | promised     |
| applauded     | climaxed     | drawled       | greeted              | laughed    | prompted     |
| approved      | clowned      | drooled       | grimaced             | leered     | proposed     |
| argued        | coaxed       | echoed        | gritted              | lied       | prophesied   |
| asked         | comforted    | egged on      | grumbled             | lispd      | propounded   |
| asking        | commanded    | ejaculated    | growled              | marvelled  | protested    |
| assent        | commenced    | emended       | guffawed             | mentioned  | purred       |
| asserted      | commended    | encouraged    | guessed              | mimicked   | pursued      |
| assured       | commented    | ended         | gurgled              | minced     | put in       |
| averred       | complained   | enumerated    | gushed               | minimized  | quavered     |
| babbled       | compromised  | entreated     | haggled              | moaned     | qualified    |
| bade          | conceded     | essayed       | hailed               | mocked     | queried      |
| began         | concluded    | evaded        | halloed              | mourned    | questioned   |
| begged        | confessed    | evaluated     | halted               | mouthed    | quoted       |
| belittled     | confided     | exaggerated   | hazarded             | mumbled    | raged        |
| bellowed      | confirmed    | exclaimed     | helloed              | murmed     | ragged       |
| berated       | continued    | excused       | helped out           | muttered   | railed       |
| blamed        | contributed  | experimented  | hesitated            | mused      | rallied      |
| blared        | cooed        | explained     | hissed               | narrated   | rambled      |
| blasphemed    | corrected    | exploded      | hooted               | needed     | rasped       |
| blasted       | corroborated | explored      | howled               | nodded     | recalled     |
| blazed        | councelled   | expostulated  | implied              | noted      | reflected    |
| blurted out   | counted      | expounded     | implored             | noticed    | rejoined     |
| boasted       | countered    | extemporized  | improvised           | nozed      | remarked     |
| bood          | crabbed      | extenuated    | indicated            | notified   | remembered   |
| boomed        | cried        | extolled      | inferred             | objected   | reminded     |
| bowed         | crowd        | fabricated    | inquired             | observed   | remonstrated |
| bragged       | cursed       | falsified     | insisted             | offered    | repealed     |
| brayed        | cut in       | faltered      | interfered           | ok'd       | replied      |
| breathed      | dammed       | fawned        | interjected          | opened     | reprimanded  |
| bridled       | decided      | fenced        | interpolated         | orated     | reproved     |
| bristled      | declaimed    | fibbed        | interposed           | ordered    | resumed      |
| broke in      | declared     | fictionized   | interpreted          | pacified   | responded    |
| broke off     | decreed      | finished      | interrogated         | palliated  | retorted     |
| broke silence | decried      | fished        | interrupted          | parodied   | returned     |
| call          | defended     | flared        | intoned              | parried    | roared       |
| called        | demanded     | flashed       | invited              | paused     | ruminated    |



|             |            |           |            |                |           |
|-------------|------------|-----------|------------|----------------|-----------|
| said        | talking    | vaunted   | smiled     | sputtered      | whispered |
| saluted     | taunted    | ventured  | snapped    | stammered      | whistled  |
| stormed     | teased     | sang      | sneered    | vetoed         | wished    |
| struck back | tell       | say       | snorted    | volunteered    | wondered  |
| snuckered   | temporized | scoffed   | sobbed     | vowed          | yawned    |
| stormed     | testified  | scolded   | solaced    | wailed         | yearned   |
| suggested   | thrust in  | screamed  | soothed    | wanted to know | yelled    |
| supplicated | thundered  | shrieked  | spat out   | was his reply  | yielded   |
| supplied    | told       | shot back | speak out  | went on        | yoo-hooed |
| swore       | translated | shouted   | speaking   | wept           | yowled.   |
| talk        | urged      | sighed    | speculated | whimpered      |           |
| talked      | uttered    | simpered  | spoke      | whined         |           |

This discussion does not mean to intimate that *said* should be dropped from an author's writing vocabulary. It has its place just as much as—and probably more than—any other word. There are indeed many places in dialogue where *said* is the only appropriate word to use; to apply some

other expression in place of *said* one must study carefully shades of meaning to be expressed. If in doubt as to the appropriateness of any substitute, it is better of course to write *said* than to use some expression that would convey a slightly different meaning.

## *Developing Experience Units*

H. KENT FARLEY\*

It has been stated that, "The most indigenous and original American contribution to educational method was made by John Dewey. In general principle, Dewey identified himself with that great educational tradition which believed that the teacher's method should capitalize on the inborn active propensities of children."<sup>1</sup>

To-day, individuals active in the field of education are still striving to interpret and put into effective practice some of the "original American contributions to education" as made by Dewey. The statement that, "we must take the child where he is and start from there," has almost become a cliché, but actually it is accepted by a large number of educators. The problems as encountered by classroom teachers have

been, (1) how do I ascertain just where the child is?, (2) what *are* his specific "in-born active propensities?", and (3) after having secured acceptable answers to (1) and (2), how best may the educational program be conducted so as to facilitate maximum learning by the child?

Developmental psychology and tests and measurements have enabled the teacher to secure some tentative answers to her problems and some techniques for securing other answers to problems (1) and (2) above. With problem (3), however, there is still a great deal of contro-

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<sup>1</sup>John S. Brubacher, *A History of the Problems of Education*, New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1947, p. 237.

versy as to the most desirable line of approach. In general, teachers are fairly well agreed as to the basic principles of education, but a wide difference of opinion emerges when teaching-techniques are being considered.

Chief among the techniques developed for implementing principles based on "inborn active propensities" has been the so-called "unit." Gradually, however, there has emerged a realization that a "unit" is, in reality, a collective noun and not the name of a specific, discrete entity. Actually, many different types of units have been proposed and tried in the field. The types of units advocated have ranged all the way from the extreme subject-matter unit on the one hand to the laissez faire type on the other hand. Good practice would seem to indicate that the teacher should be active in facilitating the *development* of a unit, rather than in setting up or adapting a series of learning experiences in terms of a pre-conceived type of unit. The term "unit" would probably be used in a more acceptable manner if the user applied it to a point of view, rather than using it as a name of a series of prescribed steps.

Strickland, in her publication, *How To Build A Unit of Work*, suggests the following four methods as being the current ones used to select a unit of work:

1. The unit of work can be chosen co-operatively by the teacher and children out of the interests and ongoing activities of the group and in line with their self-appointed goals for the year.
2. The unit of work can be chosen co-operatively by teacher and children within the framework of a flexible curriculum requirement so that it fits the needs and interests of the children.

3. The unit can be selected from source volumes which list units of work or from collections of units and logs or diaries of units which are available commercially.
4. The unit of work can be developed from and around required textbook materials so that it meets the textbook-course-of-study requirements and still incorporates as much as possible of child interests and opportunities for initiative, enrichment, and differentiated work.<sup>2</sup>

It is interesting to note that as the planning proceeds from method one, above, toward method four, the planning becomes less and less a matter of the teacher facilitating the development of a unit of work, and more and more a matter of smoothing off the rough corners of rigid "textbook-course-of-study requirements," in an effort to reduce possible injury to the child. However, even when using the fourth method it is possible to do *something* in terms of the "inborn active propensities of children," though such possibilities are at best very limited.

Lee and Lee have developed the following definition:

... a *unit* consists of *purposeful* (to the learner), *related activities* so developed as to give insight into, and increased control of, some significant aspect of living; and to provide opportunities for the socialization of pupils. The key words and phrases in that definition are *purposeful to the learner, related activities, insight, increased control, significant aspect of the environment, and socialization*.<sup>3</sup>

To those who accept the above definition it seems rather difficult to think of methods three and four as achieving truly acceptable types of units. Frequently, along with the above definition, methods one and two have been labeled "experience units." Methods three and four fail

to qualify for this classification since it would be practically impossible for them to measure up to the part of the definition which states that the activities composing the unit must be, "...purposeful (to the learner)."

In line with the above definition and expressed philosophy the following outline has been developed in an effort to guide the thinking of the teacher who is conscientiously striving to capitalize on the "inborn active propensities of children."

### SUGGESTED OUTLINE FOR A UNIT OF WORK

#### A. *Title of Unit*

The title of the proposed unit should identify the broad, general area of living which has been tentatively selected for exploration by the pupils and teacher on the basis of the pupils' interests and needs.

#### B. *Point-Of-Origin*

This section should indicate possible experiences out of which the unit proper might conceivably grow.

#### C. *Identification of Problems*

Here are indicated problems which pupils might conceivably propose as a result of their having been a part of some ongoing experience which constituted the point-of-origin.

<sup>2</sup>Ruth G. Strickland, *How To Build A Unit of Work*, Washington, D. C.: U. S. Office of Education Bulletin 1946, No. 5, Federal Security Agency, pp. 2-3.

<sup>3</sup>J. Murray and Dorris May Lee, *The Child and His Curriculum*, New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1950, p. 222.

#### D. *Pupil Experiences*

This section should contain a wide variety of suggestive experiences in which

the pupils can engage with a view to finding solutions for the problems that have been identified.

Such experiences might well be grouped under the following headings:

#### 1. Material Resources:

- a. printed,
  - books, magazines, newspapers, pamphlets, etc.
- b. audio-visual,
  - 1) graphic materials, blackboard, bulletin board, posters, maps etc.
  - 2) still pictures, mounted, slides, filmstrips, textbooks, etc.
  - 3) moving pictures, silent and sound.
  - 4) museum materials, objects, specimens, models, displays, exhibits, etc.
  - 5) life situation experiences, dramatics, demonstrations, experiments, field trips, etc.

#### 2. Personnel Resources:

- a. school,
- b. home,
- c. community,
- d. state,
- e. nation,
- f. universe.

#### E. *Application of Pupil Experiences*

A list of suggested techniques which might be employed by the pupils to facilitate sharing of their experiences with each other in new situations.

#### F. *Possible Benefits to the Pupils*

A list of benefits that might reasonably be expected to accrue to the pupils as a result of the various experiences that constituted the unit. Such a list might well be expressed in terms of the pupils'

1. growth in knowledge
2. growth in attitudes
3. growth in practices.

### G. *Future Direction*

Here are indicated some future educational experiences which might possibly grow out of this unit. That is, the avenues for continued growth that have been opened up to the pupils as a result of their having had the experiences developed in the unit of work.

By developing a unit of work in line with the above suggested outline it is believed that the following results might well be achieved:

1. The unit will be chosen cooperatively by the teacher and children out of the interests and on going activities of the

group and in line with their self-appointed goals for the year.

2. The unit will consist of purposeful (to the learner), related activities, so developed as to give insight into, and increased control of, some significant aspect of living; and provide opportunities for the socialization of the pupils.

3. The pertinent question as to the amount and timing of unit-planning will have been answered to a large degree.

4. The unit will be neither a strictly subject-matter unit on the one hand nor a strictly laissez faire unit on the other hand, but a unit developed at some desirable place between those two extremes.

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## *Can We Teach Word Meaning?*

CARL H. DELACATO<sup>1</sup>

AND

S. RICHARD MOYER<sup>2</sup>

The modern method of teaching reading is in part the result of the Gestalt concept of learning. Such an approach to teaching and learning, stressing "wholes" rather than "parts," has led educators to the point that the teaching of reading begins with the recognition of symbols incorporating a complete experience, i. e., a sentence. From the sentence the progress is toward the recognition of phrases, then words. Words seem to have become the irreducible "wholes" in much of the methodology of the teaching of reading. The "word sight" or "whole" method of teaching reading has proved quite successful from the point of view of proficiency in the reading skills. This success has led us to postpone the analysis of words at a phonetic or structural level during the early

phases of reading instruction. Analysis of words from the meaning aspect is, in many instances, also postponed and in many instances, completely eliminated from the early reading activities. The old method of teaching reading, which was based on the mechanical analysis of words as the primary instructional basis, brought forth a reaction toward word analysis in any form. The analysis of word meanings has suffered from this reaction and children's ability to understand word meanings has suffered from this feeling that most analytical activities related to words was to be postponed or omitted from the educational structure.

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### Problem

The authors feel that this tendency to slight the analytical activities in the early stages of reading is contributing to a weakness on the part of children to understand word meanings and their relationships to reality. They feel that the weakness is the result of the tendency of teachers to approach all phases of reading through the "whole" method and in so doing, to eliminate the needed analytical experiences in the area of meaning in the early reading activities.

The ascertainment of the meaning of words for the beginning reader is a direct function of his apperceptive background. Such apperceptions vary with children and in many instances need enrichment. This enrichment can be accomplished only through the creation of an understanding of the function of the meaning of language and through the creation of a new emphasis for its presentation to children during their early reading experiences.

### Types of Word Meanings

The meaning of a word may be broken down for convenience sake into two different types. There is the *denotative* meaning and the *connotative* meaning. The connotative meaning has two different aspects, the *informative* and the *affective*.

The denotative meaning is concerned with the object that the word names. This object is called the *referent*. Let us consider the word "dog." The object or referent of the word "dog" is any and all of the familiar animals we know so intimately as pets, see on the street, and in our gardens, to which we apply this term. The denotative meaning then covers all of the characteristics of all of the dogs which exist, have ever existed, or ever will exist. The denotative meaning is, as we can see, an abstraction and refers to no real dog in existence. We can refer to real dogs by name such as Mr. Jones' dog, Rover, or Mr. Smith's dog, Fido. Here the referent is one certain dog, that is, Rover or Fido.

We should remember, however, that we cannot say the object or the referent, we can only say the word "dog," "Fido," or "Rover," which stand for the referent. From the foregoing we might draw the conclusions that "dog" is an abstract term and "dog Fido" is a concrete term, but strangely, all words or terms are abstract. This fact has been presented by A. Korzybski in his book, *Science and Sanity*. The proof of this fact is too complex to go into here but a short, concise, layman's version of Korzybski's discussion appears in S. I. Hayakawa's *Language in Action*.

Connotations of a word or term are those meanings which occur to us upon hearing or seeing a word which is not covered by the denotative meaning. For instance, all that the denotative meaning of "dog" contains, is those things we can see when we look at the animals for which the word "dog" is a name. The connotative meaning carries more content. The informative aspect of the connotative meaning of the word "dog" carries such statements as "a mammal," "a quadruped," "a carnivora," or "a domesticated animal." The affective aspects of the connotative meaning of the word "dog" carry such statements as "a vicious animal," "a friendly animal," "a smelly animal," "man's best friend," or "a noisy animal." As we can see, these affective connotations depend entirely or almost entirely on the emotional feelings of the person thinking about or saying the word "dog."

Healthy meanings are those which fall in the denotative class and the informative aspect of the connotative class. From the statements of these meanings we are able to draw our most universally valid inferences, and admittedly the purpose of learning is to get data which allow us to live in and manipulate our environment as efficiently as possible. The mark of the neurotic and the maladjusted person is his inefficiency in manipulating his environment. He consistently behaves in such a way as to thwart his own

wants and desires relative to his environment. Only valid inferences help him to take realistic cognizance of his environment.

When we deal, however, with denotative and informative connotative meanings we must remember that these are abstractions. They are statements about the referent but none of them takes into consideration all the characteristics of the referent. Each statement deals with only part of the characteristics of the referent and is therefore misleading in one sense or another. The ideal situation is to teach the child to be conscious always of the fact that meanings are abstractions and therefore deal with only a part of the object or referent.

### *How Children Learn Word Meanings*

Ordinarily none of the preceding distinctions will take place in the teacher's thinking. Indiscriminately the child is taught denotation, affective connotation, and informative connotation. Sometimes we find that the teacher teaches the most intense affective connotations absolutely unconsciously. These may range through the erotic to warm likes, disgusts, mild disapproval to anger, hate, and through fear to extreme fright. The teacher need not express these meanings in words to teach them. The child takes his cues from overtones in factual words (not pertaining to these affects or emotions), tonal volume, stance, bodily tension (muscular), changes of tempo, motion of the hands and body, unconscious facial expression, and the like. The child unconsciously learns the teacher's affective connotations from these cues by a well known psychological process called empathy.<sup>3</sup>

Let us imagine now what might happen as

<sup>3</sup>For definitions and description of the process of empathy see: G. W. Allport, *Personality*, (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1937), pp. 530-533. G. Murphy, *Personality*, (New York: Harper & Bros., 1947), pp. 222, 494, 985. R. S. Woodworth and D. Marquis, *Psychology*, (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1947), pp. 345-347.

the result of Miss Brown, a confirmed dog lover, teaching first grade. Her affective connotations relative to the word "dog" are taught to her pupils, either by direct statement, or by empathetic processes, or both. The child who has little or no experience with dogs accepts her ideas and subsequently is bitten by a vicious dog. In another classroom in the same school, Miss Jones, with a lifelong fear of dogs, teaches another first grade class. By the same process some of her children who have little experience with dogs develop an unreasonable fear of dogs. As if this were not enough, two small boys, one from each class, meet on the playground at recess, start discussions dogs and get into a violent fight because one holds that dogs are friendly and the other, that they are dangerous. Extend this to other words and age levels and we can soon see that dangerous situations, disagreements, and poor adjustment may develop when inexperienced children are taught affective connotations.

It is obvious that affective connotations are mostly ideas of meaning about a word which are purely personal, obviously emotional, and may be in conflict with what everyone else believes is the meaning of the word. Furthermore, these connotations may lead to completely invalid reasoning.

Such affective connotation may at times be partially offset by denotation and informative connotation. Let us suppose that because the teacher thinks the children all know the meaning of the word in question, she neglects to give any definitions or meanings. Some of the children are not sure or others do not know the meaning of the word. They must get the meaning from context and from the affective connotation which the teacher reflects in her behavior through the process of empathy whenever the word is used. At best, meaning drawn from context is partial and all too often misleading. This, coupled with the affective connotations the child picks up, gives him a

biased meaning of the word or an absolutely invalid meaning.

### *The Teaching of Word Meaning*

The indications are that we should not teach children affective connotations of words. But how are we to escape this since they seem to be so deeply imbedded in the emotional processes of the teacher?

This can be accomplished primarily by teaching decisively and clearly the denotative meaning and informative connotative meaning of the word. Such instruction should in most cases help greatly to offset any affective connotations the teacher may express unconsciously. Such a program may be carried out by the teacher by planning, previous to the introduction of an experience unit, with the aid of the dictionary and an idea of the referent as to just what denotative meanings are to be taught. In addition, reference books such as the encyclopedia, standard school texts, and materials published specifically for unit reference will present a clear picture of just what informative connotative meanings are to be taught. Naturally these meanings are best taught, through the medium of the experience unit, but in some instances we may find that many loose ends are left when a unit has been completed. These must be tied up in discussion which evokes and unifies all aspects of both the denotative and informative connotative meanings of the word. On the other hand, we may find the experience unit presents affective connotative meanings quite blatantly without an apparent way to circumscribe it. As an example, let us assume that a first grade experience unit on pets presents our mythical "dog" as man's best friend. What happens if he bites? If the unit can carry the meaning load we should present him as the dual aspect we should bring out the biting aspects of our personality he is. That is, in some cases he bites, in others, he wags his tail. If the experience unit can't carry the meaning load,

"dog" in a post mortem unifying discussion of our experience unit. Such an exposition offsets the onesidedness of most affective connotations and gives it a multivalued perspective rather than a onesided perspective.

Such a process, which makes clear the various aspects of the meaning of a word or term by calling for definitions during the planning phase of the unit, may help the teacher to understand and rid herself of certain affective connotations in which she believes. For instance, the sorting out of meanings into denotative, informative connotative, and affective connotative categories may help her to understand that the dog who bites is only one of many dogs. Biting is not necessarily a rule for dogs, and hence does not call for an emotional reaction of fear when the word "dog" is mentioned.

The authors feel that the planning of units of experience toward denotative and informative connotative meanings, plus the emphasis on the understanding of meanings will not only facilitate the child's ability to think logically and realistically, but also will help him to acquire reading skills more easily. They further feel that it will tend to prevent reading problems which are in part related to the inability to comprehend written symbols because of a lack of understanding of meanings. They have found that emphasis of the meaning of experiences and words and the correction of the affective connotations of words are important factors in helping children to overcome reading problems.<sup>4</sup> They further feel that the teaching of denotative and informative connotative meanings will give children new tools with which to deal with their environment effectively.

### *Summary*

The "whole" method of teaching reading has led us to overlook the value of the analytic

<sup>4</sup>Janice F. and Carl H. Delacato, "A Group Approach to Remedial Reading," *Elementary English*, XXIX, (March, 1952), 142-149.

approach to the teaching of reading in its early stages. The analysis of the meaning of words and the presentation of those meanings within the structure of the experience unit are important contributions to the language proficiency and the mental health of the children. The planning of a unit must include as one of its most important phases research, on the part of the teacher, relative to the meaning of the words which will be introduced. A recapitulation and discussion of the meanings of these words following the unit, in which the denotative and connotative informative meanings are separated

from the connotative affective meanings, will help the child to clarify his thinking relative to the words with which he has been working. Such clarifications help children to deal more effectively with the environment and in so doing, tend to improve language proficiency and to make a significant contribution toward mental health. Such clarification of the meanings of words will provide children with valid apperceptions and functional intellectual data which will facilitate and foster more adequate relationships with the realities of the environment.

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## *Developmental Characteristics of Childhood Related to the Language Arts Curriculum*

WILLIAM J. LODGE<sup>1</sup>

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Interest in the study of language development and activities as strands in the pattern of total growth of the child is a phenomenon of the recent past and of the present. In an earlier day, psychologists considered language as a means of expressing mental content; educators regarded language primarily as a body of skills, and the exclusive emphasis in instruction lay in imparting these important skills of literacy. Probably Piaget (29), more than any other psychologist, has stimulated interest in language as communication and as a means of studying the child himself. Both psychologists and educators today have come to look upon language as a vitally important form of behavior through which the individual adjusts himself to his social environment. Accordingly, the field of language activities embraces the entire range of childhood interests and experiences. Some emphasis on language activities as arts (36) and greater attention to the language arts as communicative activities (9, 17, 28, 39) have enriched the modern concept of the language arts.

This broadening concept not only adds to the variety of language activities in home and school but brings language behavior closer to other forms of behavior. Communication of ideas in a social setting involves language abilities, purposes for communication, thinking, physical equipment to use in communicating, and social relationships with an individual or group. Thus language activity and development is closely related to other activities and to general mental, physical, and social development. Some of these relationships are traced below to illustrate how different language abilities appear with the increasing maturity of infancy, childhood and youth. The evidence presented emphasizes the elementary school years and is restricted to growth patterns in language since physical, mental, social and other growth characteristics have been ably summarized in a number of child psychology texts. The first sections below trace growth in various phases of

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language. A final section emphasizes the interrelationships of such growth and implications of it for the language arts curriculum.

## **II. THE LANGUAGE ARTS IN THE TOTAL GROWTH OF THE CHILD**

### **A. The Development of Oral Language**

Research workers in child development have called attention to the enormous amount of learning which goes on prior to a child's entrance into school and continues in many out-of-school activities. The child who enters kindergarten or first grade brings with him a substantial vocabulary, a set of language patterns, and a background of experience which has served to encourage or discourage the active seeking of information and the building of concepts through asking questions, through exploring his environment, and through travel beyond the immediate geographical confines of his neighborhood. Seashore (38) states that the child at the age of six is likely to know 17,000 words plus 7,000 derivatives and that he can reasonably expect to add approximately 5,000 words each year thereafter for a considerable period of years. Seashore's estimate, based upon the research of M. K. Smith, yields a very high estimate of the total vocabulary of the first grader. Other more conservative authorities agree that the vocabulary comprises several thousand words rather than several hundred, the number educators once thought the child of this age could use.

In addition, the child of six uses every part of speech and every form of sentence. From the age of twelve or eighteen months until he enters school, he has had constant practice in the use of language. His need to communicate has been so great that he has acquired patterns which his environment has furnished without regard to their correctness in the eyes of later teachers. Anderson (1) states that the child's spoken language has reached ninety per cent of its mature level when judged on the basis of sen-

tence structure before the child knows that grammar exists. He goes on to say that the significant period for acquiring spoken language in childhood is from two to eight years of age, that while vocabulary still increases and some additional skills in the use of sentences appear after the age of eight, the essentials of spoken language are already present by that age.

Anderson also states that a study of articulation indicates that the only child performs better than the singleton and the singleton better than twins. He also points out that improvement in articulation comes slowly and that early defects in articulation persist longer than defects in content. (2)

The child's hearing affects growth in other language abilities. Rossignol (33), in investigating the relationship among hearing acuity, speech production, and reading performance, states that hearing acuity reaches its maximum in children between the ages of ten and fifteen years. Rossignol's research, involving 229 first and second graders, indicates that there is a significant relationship between hearing acuity and speech production as measured by an articulation test and a sound repetition test. While the pronunciation of familiar words in the child's speech repertory is unrelated to hearing acuity, the pronunciation of new words varies with hearing acuity. Since children retested on consonant sounds made significantly better scores when they could see the face of the examiner, Rossignol concludes that visual clues are very important to the young child in learning new words. Thus finer distinctions in speech production may be lost when visual clues are not present. Rossignol also found that reading performance varied significantly with speech production, both for articulation of sound in familiar words and for skills in repeating nonsense syllables. Anderson (2) cites as evidence that hearing acuity is related to quality of speech a study of nine-to fourteen-year-old children who took standard hearing and articulation tests. No child with better-than-

normal hearing was found to have articulation defects; of the children with average hearing, only a small proportion had such defects. However, of those with below average hearing some had speech defects, and of those with very poor hearing, many had such defects.

School life, which usually inhibits some language and motor activity, may bring disturbances in oral language development and in the motor activities associated with it for some children. The age of six marks the onset of stuttering in a small number of children. Travis (43) says that about eighty per cent of all stutterers begin to stutter during the second, fourth, or sixth year of life, periods which correspond with important stages in language development. The age of six, for example, marks the beginning of the complicated speech, manual performance, and behavior restrictions required of the child in adjusting to the school situation. Boys, perhaps less tractable than girls and slower in language development, are in almost a two-to-one majority among stutterers. One study (43) found 202 boys to 119 girls in a group of speech defectives, and in another group forty-three boys to twenty-two girls. Stuttering has been associated with many possible causes including inconsistent, unstable hand usage, but the relationship between these phenomena is not clear. Handedness is likely to be well established by the age of four. However, since left handedness is likely to be less of a pronounced trait than right handedness, retraining above the fourth year is possible; whether to attempt it depends upon the child's age, temperament, learning ability, extent of the preference and methods used. It is easier for the child to learn a new skill such as writing with the non-dominant hand than to retrain the non-dominant hand in a skill already learned. (20)

In these and other language skills it is difficult to overestimate individual differences in patterns of language development and facility in dealing with language situations. McCarthy

(25) states that language is one area in which more marked and more striking degrees of individual differences can be observed than in almost any other. Probably the best single index of the child's language development at the primary level is average length of response. McCarthy states that average length of response, a measure which has been used satisfactorily in many major investigations, "is a highly sensitive index that reveals developmental trends from infancy to maturity and reflects sex, occupational, and intellectual group differences with remarkable consistency." (25:167) A number of studies indicate also that accuracy of speech sounds exhibits a strong degree of relationship to measures of length, completeness, and complexity during this period. The researches of Sister Mary Shire, E. A. Davis, and J. G. Yedinack all point to the key importance of satisfactory command of articulation in furthering vocabulary development, reading readiness, and all other language activities. Yedinack's research, for example, indicates that at the second grade level there is a strong relationship between reading disability and articulation defects. (46)

### *B. The Development of Written Language*

Studies of growth in composition abilities indicate that there are developmental trends in the use of written language which the teacher may employ as guideposts. Hoppes (21), in a study of the writing of 386 pupils in grades three to six in a Chicago public school, found that growth in this area might be summarized as (a) growth in the number of sentences used in a composition, (b) growth in the length and complexity of sentences, (c) decline in the use of "run-on" sentences, although this type of error was uncommon, (d) decrease in unpleasant repetition of words and phrases, (e) growth in the use of inverted order of subject and predicate, indicative of the ability to give emphasis to an idea by increasing the prominence of its position, (f) increase in the proportion

of abstract nouns accompanied by decrease in proportion of specific, concrete, individual nouns, and (g) decline in the number of sentences whose subject is "I", possibly marking a decline in egocentrism. Hoppes also found that in all grades girls tend to write more than boys.

Bear's study (6) of the written compositions of almost 12,000 children in grades one through eight in the St. Louis public schools indicates that the number of sentences used by a child in telling a story varies from an average of three sentences in the first grade to an average of approximately ten in the sixth grade. The length of the composition remained approximately the same from grade six through eight. The average number of sentences used by girls in all grades was slightly higher than the number used by boys. Bear regards the number of sentences used as an elemental factor in language growth. She also reports that complex sentences were used more commonly than compound, although both types were employed at all levels. She concludes that the use of the complex sentence appears to be another of the elemental factors in the growth of language usage, and to correlate as closely as any other factor with maturity in language ability. There were few children who used incomplete sentences in this study, but the percentages of pupils using "run-on" sentences increased rapidly until grade five. The percentage dropped slightly from fifty-nine in grade six to fifty-one in grade eight. Bear's research would indicate that this phase of language usage deserves consideration in the written language program of the elementary school.

Creative writing, which may be partly an individual and partly a group affair, can give opportunity for vocabulary growth, sociability, sensitivity to meanings, and probably some growth in order and sequence in relating occurrences. (32, 45) However, the child's capacity for organizing and relating experiences in logical or connected fashion is limited by ma-

turational factors. Typically, not until a child is nine or ten can he give a reasonably accurate account of what happened within a definite period of time. (2)

Swenson and Caldwell (40), who analyzed 680 letters written by pupils from grade four through twelve in a typical midwestern community, report that pupils' letters showed an encouraging improvement in communication skill from grade to grade, that performance of individual children at each grade level varied widely enough to correspond to average performance at several grade levels and that variation within grades was fairly consistent from grade to grade. They report that there was evidenced a general positive relationship between ability in written communication and intelligence, and a trend toward increasing differentiation of writing ability by intelligence level with more years of schooling. The same writers, in reporting on spelling in the same group of letters, state that an increase in the average length of letters and a reduction in spelling errors were both marked between the fifth and sixth grade groups. This reduction, they feel, may indicate some association between mastery of mechanics (spelling in this case) and freedom of written expression, as evidenced by the amount written. (41)

An earlier study by LaBrant (22) was concerned with the problem of how skill increases in the ability to subordinate ideas in written composition. LaBrant's research, which involved 986 public school children enrolled in grades four through twelve, indicates that the ability to subordinate is a function of chronological as well as of mental age and is markedly influenced by chronological age when mental age is held constant. This finding again points to the importance of maturation in attaining mastery of the use of language. LaBrant also found that while the length of clauses remained constant between the ages of eight and sixteen, the context of subordinate clauses became more exact

with increasing maturation of the writers. Except for the fact that girls wrote longer compositions than boys, sex differences were relatively insignificant in the abilities tested in this study and at these grade levels.

The research of Frogner (15), which included an analysis of the compositions of approximately one thousand seventh, ninth, and eleventh grade boys and girls indicates that increased use of complex sentences from one grade level to the next is a mark of increasing maturity rather than of superior intelligence. Frogner found that in all grades adverbial clauses have the highest percentage of usage, followed by noun, and then by adjective clauses. From grade seven to eleven there was a decrease in the proportion of adverbial clauses of place, manner, concession, and condition. Frogner also found that the use of dependent clauses was partially dependent upon the type of writing done. Thus exposition contained the highest number of dependent clauses, and narration contained a higher percentage than did letter writing.

### *C. The Development of the Mechanics of Handwriting and Spelling*

While reading requires certain motor and perceptual skills controlled always by meaning, handwriting makes still larger demands on the neuro-muscular system. The ability to write, unlike reading, depends chiefly upon motor control. It is thus a developmental process which cannot be hurried by artificial means. The amount of readiness activity which can be undertaken profitably in other areas is here limited by the factor of the maturation of the child's nervous system. (19) One of the soundest reasons for the use of manuscript writing in the primary grades is the fact that it is better suited to large muscle activity than is cursive writing, since it makes use exclusively of unjoined letters involving only straight lines and curves, resulting in reduced strain upon the young

child. A second major advantage of manuscript writing over cursive is its closer resemblance to the printed word involved in reading. Children of the six-to eight-year age span are in a stage of gradual transition from large muscle to small muscle use. This transitional process cannot be hurried before the child is ready in a neuro-muscular sense to use the hand-wrist-finger movements demanded by handwriting. For these reasons, handwriting, when it does come, should be limited initially to the blackboard or widely ruled paper and to pencils and crayons of large circumference.

Psychological readiness for handwriting consists of the child's having something to say and an urge to say it in writing. Dawson (13) has pointed out that handwriting should not be taught as a "subject" in its own right, but rather as a means to a desired end. Today's emphasis is away from the push-and-pull, oval drill of yesteryear and toward functional handwriting used as a tool, with emphasis on legibility and reasonable speed and with the encouragement of the development of some individual style rather than slavish following of this or that handwriting "system." Within this framework, handwriting still needs to be practiced, and such practice can result in decided gains in both legibility and speed.

In terms of spelling, too, psychological readiness is largely a matter of giving the child the words he needs when he needs them and when he is able to learn to spell them. In functional spelling, as in handwriting, the child needs to have ideas to express and to know the meaning of an adequate number of words. Artley (3) has pointed out that growth in reading, writing, or spelling is contingent upon depth and richness of experience which provides ideas and the opportunity for the use of words. Spelling readiness, according to Artley, includes the following abilities: (1) auditory perception and discrimination, or the ability to recognize the sounds that are heard in a word, to associate



with them their appropriate letter symbols or phonograms, (2) visual perception and discrimination, or the ability to analyze a word visually, noting its arrangement of letters, the presence of familiar prefixes or suffixes, syllables, or of already known "little words" and the visual similarity of the new word with an already familiar one, (3) accurate pronunciation and careful enunciation, (4) clear recognition of the meaning, since a word whose meaning is unknown is not going to be used by the child in either spoken or written discourse, and (5) accurate handwriting and proper letter formation.

Russell's study (37), carried on in Canada, resulted in these significant findings, among others: (1) spelling readiness was acquired in the high first grade by most of his subjects, (2) spelling success was facilitated by attention directed toward phonetic analysis, configuration, sound of words, syllabication, and recognition of word families, (3) spelling abilities in the second grades studied were found to be closely related to abilities in recognition of words and capital and lower case letters and to visual and auditory perceptive abilities, and (4) a constellation of language skills, which can be taught and which seems basic to success in the language arts, at least at the primary level, was identified.

A further reason, in addition to the natural sequence of the child's language development, for delaying more formal spelling instruction until the later primary period is the fact that the intensive word study required by spelling is essentially in direct conflict with the efficient teaching of beginning reading, which today emphasizes meaningful phrase reading rather than parrot-like word-by-word or, worse, letter-by-letter analysis. The answer to this problem, as Cole (10) has said, is not to return to cumbersome and inefficient methods of teaching reading but to modify the initiation of the formal spelling program.

### III. SOME INTERRELATIONSHIPS OF THE LANGUAGE ARTS

The separation of language growth into oral, written and mechanical aspects of language in the three sections above needs to be corrected by an emphasis upon the interrelatedness of all phases of language development. Some of the research showing relationships has been summarized by Hildreth (18) and by Artley (4).

The interrelatedness of language growth shows first in the sequential patterns of language development discussed above; i.e., the child listens with comprehension before he speaks with meaning; he develops a substantial oral vocabulary before he reads; he makes considerable reading progress before he writes; and he usually begins to spell when he needs spelling in his own writing.

Reading is regarded as one of the most important academic achievements of the early elementary years, but successful reading depends primarily upon the development of a stock of clear and accurate concepts and upon the continuing development of general speech skills in articulation, enunciation, and phrasing, all of which can best come through practice in group situations devised and guided by a skillful teacher. An understanding of the function of language in conveying meanings, developing ideas, sharing experiences and feeling, listening so that the listener may develop his own ideas or feel as the speaker feels, is enhanced through emphasis upon communication in an audience situation in oral reading and speaking. Since usage depends upon language habits learned by ear, the teacher would do well to concentrate upon gross errors which occur in the child's speech patterns, being aware that her own speech must serve as a model for correctness in grammar, enunciation, articulation, pitch, and phrasing. The interrelations of the language arts involved in handwriting and spelling readiness

have been pointed out in the preceding section of this chapter.

At the later elementary level, reading is likely to furnish much of the material for oral or written conversation and discussion. Despite the competition of movies, radio, and television, reading is still an important key to the child's acquiring an understanding of the broader world which lies beyond the home and the neighborhood and about which children in these years are increasingly concerned. The teaching of usage at this level, as at the early elementary level, will depend upon the teacher's ability to diagnose and correct those errors incurring the greatest social penalty in the group. Artley (4) has pointed out the close relationship that reading comprehension bears to other language abilities.

Beery (8) has indicated that reciprocal relations between reading and listening includes these: (1) pupils will listen better if they expect to use what they hear; (2) listening needs to be reinforced by other modes of experience; and (3) since comprehension improves when pupils are encouraged to check themselves on the ideas gained from reading, listening probably needs similar checks. Several writers, including Beery, have emphasized the fact that listening as a developmental skill needs to be explored by research.

While speaking and writing are closely allied arts, students of language development and teachers must be aware that the two are very different processes, so different as to constitute almost different arts. Anderson (1:252) has summarized the differences in the way they are acquired thus:

1. Rate of acquisition: . . . Skill in spoken language builds itself up rapidly, whereas skill in writing comes slowly.
2. Quantity of experience: . . . The amount of practice in writing from the first to the eighth grade is at the outside not more than the equivalent of two weeks' practice in oral expression had by the child at the age of four or five. . .

3. Excessive criticism: . . . If we calculated the proportion of criticisms made by the most critical mother to the total number of words spoken by the child, the resulting figure would be very small indeed, but if the same comparison were made for written language in the classroom, the figure would be very high. . . my point is essentially that the excessive criticism to which the child's writing in its early stages is subjected, is exactly the opposite of the situation which facilitates the acquisition of spoken language in the young child. . .

4. Ease of assignment: . . . All the children in the classroom can write, while all the children cannot talk at the same time. Hence written work can be used to keep children busy whether or not it makes any contribution to their well being.

5. The audience: . . . The greatest difference between written and spoken language, however, comes when we think of the audiences to which they are addressed. Spoken language is a form of social intercommunication in a *person to person* relation. It takes place in a functional situation in which it is used to secure effects or to influence other people. The written composition on the other hand is for the teacher and gets its entire meaning from the teacher's reactions. . . from the developmental point of view, an audience to be influenced or changed by the language is the most important feature of the process of intercommunication. (1)

Although such differences exist in terms of usual classroom procedures, it is still true that the child's different language abilities tend to grow together and to be positively related to one another.

In addition to the interrelatedness of the various language arts as demonstrated in developmental sequences, the close relationships among them are illustrated in correlational studies showing how various phases of language are related to factors such as mental ability, socio-economic status, sibling status, and sex. Some of these relationships, such as those involving socio-economic background, are developed more fully in other parts of this series.

The child's language is probably the best means of studying his mental ability and his thinking. Curti (12) believes that perceptual and ideational meanings develop side by side and that they are related to intelligence, social status, and the stage of cultural development attained by the society in which the child lives. While many of the conclusions of Piaget are open to question in the light of current research evidence, he did call attention to the fact that much of children's thinking is characterized by egocentrism, absolutism, animism, and a lack of understanding of cause-and-effect relationships. Many of these characteristics of children's thinking persist into adulthood. Research tells little about the ages at which children can learn key concepts which are necessary to a development of social and scientific understandings and attitudes. We do know that accurate and reasonably complete concepts do not appear until the later years of childhood. This slowness, however, may be due to the great number and complexity of situations which the child must master rather than to an inner "maturational" level. (12)

The study of Biber and associates (7) of the school life of a group of seven year olds confirms the assumption that the period from seven to eight years marks a decline in egocentrism and is a period when the child is most clearly oriented toward acquiring "the control, the power that are the by-products of establishing functioning relations to an expanding environment." Biber found that this group of ten children used language more as a means of communication of ideas than as a means of expression of feeling. In general discussion, they showed a tendency to connect a general topic of discussion with personal happenings in their own experience. Gaining knowledge thus functioned as an extension of the self. Their emerging concepts were active and involved active, observable ideas.

Baker (5), in his study of children's free discussions in grades two, four, and six in three

schools in the New York metropolitan area, found that children's free discussions tend to be factual and concerned with the present. There were gradual gains apparent in the fourth and sixth grades in terms of the attention given voluntarily to adult activities and interests. The higher the grade, the greater the dependence upon vicarious experience. Baker found second graders to be almost entirely individualistic in expression with little give and take as compared to fourth and sixth graders.

Baker's study also pointed out some interesting differences between groups of varying socio-economic status. Groups with higher economic status, although not significantly higher intelligence quotients, devoted less attention in discussion to books, radio, and movies, but gave evidence of having more information, probing more deeply, sticking to the point, and having better vocabularies and superior value systems.

The evidence of the differences between status groups points out not only the differences in language development, but also important differences in interests and values. These may arise in the case of the child of lower status from what Lewin (24) has termed "the early and sharp separation of reality and unreality," which he defines as being unfavorable to the child's development.

Plant's observation (30) that the effect of poverty, and particularly of overcrowding, on the personality development of the growing child was to break illusions, to destroy "goal images" soon after they are formed, to make children realistic on the negative and discouraging side, is perhaps an amplification of Lewin's point and an explanation for the differences which are so apparent in the discussions of the groups which Baker observed.

The most obvious differences in language development at all school levels are those differences in speech patterns associated primarily with differences in socio-economic status. All

measures of linguistic maturity as well as conventional standards indicate the superiority of children from the upper social levels. A child exposed to a large vocabulary and skill in its use soon develops, by observation and imitation, facility of expression, exactness of meaning, and correct grammatical form. A child from poorer circumstances can hope to acquire these skills only with considerable effort and much conscious unlearning and relearning of language.

Finally, faulty speech articulation is related to sex differences, size of family, hearing acuity, and emotional and mental maturity. Sex differences in favor of girls in the matter of comprehension ability in speech, as in all other aspects of language growth, appear at an early level. According to E. A. Davis, girls retain up to the nine-and-a-half-year level superiority in articulation as well as in word usage, length, complexity, and grammatical correctness of sentences. Two studies indicate that sex differences in comprehensibility of speech are more marked among children of the lower socio-economic levels. (26)

The sample findings given above indicate that personal and environmental factors are likely to influence all forms of language behavior. As in the case of the child's developmental sequences, the results indicate close relationships among the various phases of language behavior and achievement. Such relationships have not always been fostered by a school program which divides such activities as reading, spelling, and writing into separate, even water-tight compartments. Other articles in this series indicate some specific directions the language curriculum must follow if it is to be guided by these child development data.

This chapter has indicated the importance of such ideas as the broad range of communicative activities, developmental patterns in various phases of language and the variation from child to child in different language arts abilities re-

sulting from individual personality factors and from the child's social environment.

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(Continued on Page 122)

# Current English Forum

## Diagraming Sentences

A teacher asks: "I teach the diagraming of sentences to my seventh and eighth grade pupils because my superiors recommend it. I find that a considerable number of my boys and girls, who learn to diagram sentences of reasonable length, fail to write better sentences or speak better than before they had this work in diagraming. Is there some way of making sentence diagraming show results in pupils' use of English, or is a mere formal knowledge of grammar all that we can expect of it?"

The writer went through elementary and secondary school during a time in which diagraming of sentences was a standard feature of the English class work in the upper elementary years and in secondary school. He learned to diagram "sentences of reasonable length." As a young high school teacher he taught diagraming because it seemed expected of him, and because he assumed it would help his students, somehow, to speak and write the English language with greater control and accuracy. It took a combination of his own teaching experience, and some study of the structure and use of the English language, to persuade him that diagraming of the time-honored varieties is not linguistically sound or useful in improving the English usage of young people. There are several reasons why this is the case.

First, what appear to be sentences of quite clear and relatively simple meaning often prove to convey decidedly different meaning in differing situations. "He made a long run." might mean that a football player ran many yards with the ball. But some one might speak the "same" sentence to assert that a locomotive engineer "made a long run," or that an airplane pilot flew his ship a long distance. Even in the latter instance, the reference could be to either a commercial airline pilot or a combat pilot.

The reader can suggest to himself various possible meanings for such sentences as "The boy made a basket," "They performed a daring deed," and "she caught the biggest fish of all." It is true, of course, that any of these sentences would "diagram," in the same way regardless of what was meant by it. But what is more important about such a sentence—a blackboard picture of its separate words, or the possible meanings it can express?

Second, sentences whose "syntax" may appear very simple are sometimes analyzable in different ways, depending on what a speaker or writer intends and on what a listener or reader understands to be meant. "He sent a gift from New York" seems at first, perhaps, to present no problem. But does the phrase, "from New York" describe "gift" in an "adjective" manner, or qualify the verb, "sent," in an "adverb" way? We place adverb modifiers quite freely in our sentences. Suppose the speaker of this sentence feels "from New York" as a qualifier of "sent," and the listener understands "from New York" as a description of "gift." Whose "diagram" would be "right"? Or take a sentence like "He drives the car in the yard." Does the sentence mean that he drives the car in the yard only? If so, "in the yard," is an adverbial modifier of "drives," the verb. But the speaker of this sentence may be distinguishing between two automobiles, one "in the yard" and another in the garage. In this case the speaker would intend "in the yard" as an adjective modifier of the noun, "car." The function of such phrases as "from New York" and "in the yard" cannot be determined by any diagram. The meaning of such sentences in their entirety, and of phrases like these within them, can be determined only by a total context—a whole situa-

<sup>1</sup>Lou La Brant, *We Teach English*, pp. 210-211. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1951.

tion in which what is meant by a speaker and understood by a listener is known. To diagram such sentences without such knowledge is to impose an arbitrary interpretation on the sentence. All sentences are context-dependent in varying degrees.

Third, and even more indicative of the inadequacy of diagramming as a means of sentence analysis, is the fact that sentences of clearly different meaning and of different word-order may result in identical diagrams. Professor Lou La Brant offers an amusing example of this. She writes,<sup>1</sup> "Some old practices appear again after they seem to have been thoroughly discredited. The evidence, for example, is strong for the conclusion that diagramming, once a popular form of mental gymnastics, is not helpful to writing nor to real understanding of grammar. It is clear that frequently it greatly oversimplifies structure and distorts meaning. Take these two sentences, for example: *The old man still sat on the wall. The old man sat still on the wall.* Diagrammed, they are alike; read intelligently, they are not the same." In diagramming "still" would appear beneath the verb, "sat," as an adverb, in both sentences. The diagram, inescapably the same for both sentences, ignores the different meanings which "still" expresses in the two sentences.

Fourth, diagramming is not consistent with the nature of language. We do not hear sentences in separate compartments, nor do we see them on slanting lines or in ingeniously executed abstract art forms. We hear our language in a time sequence, marked by variations in pitch, tone, and rhythm. We do not, in ordinary reading, see sentences arranged in these peculiar ways. It would seem better to learn to analyze *what is important to analyze* in sentences, by examining them as they come to us by ear or by eye. Starting with short sentences, we can learn to perceive the significant relationships within sentences of considerable complexity by dealing with them in the natural and direct ways in which we see and hear them.

No evidence exists to show that diagramming results in any improvement in a student's use of English. And small wonder, for a diagram of a sentence is not the sentence itself; a diagram is an abstraction from a sentence—an abstraction which cannot take into account all of the meanings that a sentence may express, all of the situation in speech or writing that gives these meanings. There is no real value in an analysis which lacks completeness. Physical scientists do not accept incomplete and fragmentary explanations of their phenomena. How is it justifiable for us who teach English to do so?

The fact is that diagramming continues to consume varying proportions of the time available for English instruction in many places, owing largely to the hold that tradition and habit have upon many of us. The improvement of many things has been achieved only by the willingness to relinquish outmoded ways and to undertake fresh, objective approaches.

Much of the terminology of formal grammar comes down to us of today from the eighteenth century British grammarians like Bishop Lowth, William Ward, James Harris, Robert Baker, and others, who tried to "fit" the terms of Latin or Greek grammar onto the English language. These gentlemen did not seem to realize that by 1750-1800 English had long since lost most of the inflections such as verb, noun, and adjective endings which it had had in the old English period (450-1100 A. D.) By the sixteenth century English depended on word-order as its primary device for expressing grammatical ideas.

The most important things for boys and girls to know about the syntax of the modern English sentence are (1) subject-predicate relations, (2) substantive-adjective relations, and (3) adverbial modification of the several sorts. We can show our pupils the basic ways of subject-predicate word-order by analyzing sentences on the blackboard, as they normally appear. For example:

Birds / fly.  
 Boys / fly / kites.  
 Boys / are / mischievous.  
 The young man / is / a teacher.  
 There are / cheese and crackers.  
 Some birds / fly / swiftly.  
 On the mantelpiece / is / the key.

We can demonstrate the chief word-order positions of substantive-adjective relations by analyzing sentences like these:

*The old man / sat quietly.*  
*A tall, stooped, tired, old man / was waiting.*  
*A man, old and tired, / sat on the bench.*  
*A horse of wood / was used by the Greeks.*  
*The car, which (or that) was at the curb, was a green one.*

We can make the relatively free word-order positions of adverbial modifiers clear by examining sentences like the ones below with our students.

*Quickly he / ran into the house.*  
*He / quickly ran into the house.*  
*He / ran quickly into the house.*  
*He / ran into the house quickly.*  
*Into the house he / ran quickly.*  
*Into the house / he / quickly ran.*  
*Quickly into the house / he / ran.*

*He / ran when he heard the dinner bell.*  
*When he heard the dinner bell, he ran quickly into the house.*

Isn't it actually easier to perceive subject-predicate relations, substantive-adjective relations, and adverbial modification by seeing these relations in the normal way in which we encounter sentences—in a straight line on paper or on a blackboard? If separation lines and underlining, such as are illustrated above, are used, it is much easier for our pupils to grasp these essential relations and their respective word-order positions than it is when "diagrams" are employed. And furthermore, we do not distort and abstract too greatly from sentences when we explain their syntax by these simple, natural methods.

The diagraming of sentences by the conventional methods has the four weaknesses described in this article. Let us teach our language as it is, as it is perceived by our ears and by our eyes. And finally, let us show our boys and girls that word-order, the relative positions of words in our sentences, is the basic device that modern English uses to express most of its grammatical ideas.

Edward L. Anderson  
 Brooklyn College

For the Current English Usage Committee,  
 Margaret M. Bryant, *chairman*.



# The Educational Scene

Edited by WILLIAM A. JENKINS<sup>1</sup>

"Creativeness in the Language Arts," by Mary E. Cober, in the October issue of *Elementary School Journal* interested us very much. The article expressed few startlingly new ideas, yet it covered many ideas that we English teachers often forget, suffering lapses of theory as we sink into the dulling depths of day-to-day routines.

Miss Cober first points out that language arts is more than skills. It is more than just getting a child to read correctly, but rather includes whether he understands what he reads; it is more than just getting him to spell correctly and write neatly, for it includes getting him to communicate his ideas with his words. Just teaching a child skills removes the purpose for his learning these skills.

Miss Cober points out that the language arts as a tool for living can enable a child to reach out beyond his own environment, beyond the narrow boundaries, of what he knows, and from these experiences he may create. That is, he may translate the impressions he receives by means of whatever materials are at hand. The teacher's job is to provide as many experiences as possible and foster freedom of expressing impressions of them.

The "skills" or "fundamentals" should not be neglected, according to Miss Cober's view, but taught when needed. They are tools, not the end-all of the language arts program. Criticism of mechanics should be kept at a minimum for they can become the latch-string which closes the door to a child's mind. When criticisms are given they should be in the nature of suggestions for improvement.

Miss Cober describes two experiences which will permit the child to express himself. One,

an oral activity, consists of "taking parts," never written, for a story which has been read or told. The child will quickly lose himself in the part and use up all the emotions bottled within him. Later, he can create plays from his own stories. Eventually children get to the place where they respect and enjoy the contributions of others, and at the same time satisfy their need for social activity.

The second activity which is described is that of publishing a newspaper. Miss Cober tells of a fifth grade class which put out a paper for parents' night and then decided to make it a regular event. Putting out the newspaper provided the incentive for teaching grammar, typing was learned by several children, and all eagerly tried to contribute the best song, poem, story, or description of an experience for publication.



The National Conference on Research in English will hold its annual luncheon meeting in Atlantic City, Tuesday, February 17, 1953, at 12 o'clock in the Ambassador Hotel, Room 125. The theme of the meeting will be "The Language Arts Move Ahead." The speakers and their topics are:

The Changing Language Arts in the Elementary-School Program,

Mildred A. Dawson, Boone College,  
North Carolina

Potential Contributions of Television to the Language-Arts Program,

I. Keith Tyler, Ohio State University  
Promoting Insights and Understanding  
through Reading,

Arthur I. Gates, Teachers College, Columbia University

<sup>1</sup>John Deere Junior High School, Moline, Illinois.

### Literature for Children in a Troubled World

Bernice E. Leary, Madison Public Schools, Madison, Wisconsin

Professor David H. Russell, President of the Conference, will preside. Luncheon tickets are \$3.00 and may be secured at registration headquarters. No tickets will be sold at the door.



The suggestion that schools large enough to do so adopt a junior first grade seems to be one of considerable merit. The suggestion was made by James Capra in *Illinois Education* for December. Mr. Capra's article is titled "Why Not a Junior First Grade?"

Mr. Capra's position is based on the fact that the commonality of five chronological years is not sufficient for putting all children into kindergarten, and then into first grade. Beyond their age, he writes, similarity ends.

The kindergarten teacher knows by the end of the year which child will not experience success in the first grade. As our administrative machinery now functions there are two avenues open to such a child. He can be permitted to enter the first grade and suffer frustration, or be retained in kindergarten and repeat the same experiences. Both are inadequate solutions to the problem. Mr. Capra suggests a third approach, the junior first grade.

The junior first grade would include children who are not yet ready to assimilate learning, particularly reading. It would not violate the democratic idea of heterogeneous grouping for it would include all intelligence ranges.

The prime function of the early grades is to teach reading, which forms most of the background for further learning. But recognizing that the reading readiness age varies anywhere from five to six and one half years mental age, we should provide for this span. Blocks to reading readiness, too, could be removed in the junior first grade.

According to Mr. Capra departure from the junior first grade should be flexible. Some chil-

dren could be promoted to the second from the junior first. Others, who are not yet mature enough for the second grade, could be "promoted" to the first grade. There they would undergo new experiences, yet not greatly advanced experiences, minus the ill effects of no success in very earliest stages of the child's school life.



A second approach to the problem of handling multi-level reading abilities is discussed by Kathleen B. Hester in her article "Every Child Reads Successfully in a Multiple-Level Program," which appeared in the October *Elementary School Journal*.

Miss Hester, too, recognizes the democratic principle, for she feels that each child differs in his needs, but she does not advocate grouping children into classes according to these needs. Rather, groups within the class are formed to work on specific needs, and each child is "invited" to join them. The groups are flexible and a child is soon able to select the group which best meets his needs. The children invariably select their group wisely, as wisely, in time, as the teacher could select for them.



Here are the Junior Literary Guild selections for the month of February, 1952:

For boys and girls 5 and 6 years of age: *Look!*, by Zhenya Gay. Viking, \$2.00.

For boys and girls 7 and 8 years of age: *Little Fox*, by Frances Frost. Whittlessey House, \$2.25.

For boys and girls 9, 10, and 11 years of age: *A Flag for the Fort*, by Carl Carmer. Messner, \$2.50.

For older girls, 12 to 16 years of age: *Milestone*, by Esther Elisabeth Carlson. Abelard, \$2.50.

For older boys, 12 to 16 years of age: *Rocket Jockey*, by Philip St. John. Winston, \$2.00.

## Professional Publications

*Reading for Meaning.* Proceedings of the 34th Annual Education Conference held at the University of Delaware, March 7 and 8, 1952. Volume III. Compiled by Russell G. Stauffer. Sponsored by the Reading Clinic, School of Education, University of Delaware, Newark, Del. \$1.50.

The addresses in this volume of proceedings provide solid help for teachers of reading and school supervisors and administrators. Among the contributors are William S. Gray, who spoke on "The Nature of Meaning and Factors Influencing Its Development," George W. Bond, who discussed "Reading Interests and Their Influence on Comprehension," J. Conrad Seegers, who examined "The Nature and Purpose of Critical Reading."

*They All Want to Write.* By Alvina Treut Burrows, June D. Ferebee, Doris C. Jackson, and Dorothy O. Saunders. Prentice-Hall, Inc., \$3.50.

This book, a revision and extension of a work published in 1939, represents an effort to clarify thinking about teaching elementary school children to write creatively. In the Foreword by Professor Paul Witty, the functions of creative writing are indicated. One function is to provide escape and self-expression; a three-fold function, to enable a child to record his significant experiences, to share his interests and activities, and to express himself freely, spontaneously, and joyously.

The past two decades have witnessed an increased interest in the idea of creative writing. Several professional books (e. g., *Creative Youth* by Hughes Mearns, *Creative Expression*, edited for the Progressive Education Association) have emphasized the significance of written expression. Many teachers have encouraged the idea of such creative activity in the classroom. Some writers and teachers appear interested primarily in the *form*, rather than in the *content*, of chil-

dren's writing. Others, among them the authors of this text, regard creative expression not an *end*, but a *means*, of instruction.

Several chapters of this revision have not been greatly altered. In Chapter 1, "Children and Writing," a distinction is made between *practical* and *personal* writing. In the latter, "all factors hindering free expression are discouraged." In the former, high standards of clarity, correctness, and organization are insisted upon. Another chapter, "Individual Differences in Writing," gives detailed case records of seven children and of their growth in written English over a period of years, and interprets that evidence in relation to the developmental concept of education.

The sections devoted to experiences and to teaching procedures have been completely reorganized and rewritten. "Practical Writing" covers such topics as searching for material, organizing the oral reports, starting the written reports, maintaining interest in writing, correcting and copying the reports, extending reporting in later grades, and achieving more mature organization. Another chapter, "Personal Writing," treats the topics: "How Story Writing Is Initiated," "How Children Write," "Enriching Activities," and "Gaining Control of Skills."

Two sections are entirely new, "Children's Verse" and "Story Supplement." The latter contains a collection of stories written by children. In these chapters, too, the authors place a unique emphasis on the child's own mode of self-expression through writing, as opposed to the more adult standards of excellence and perfection.

Photostatically-reproduced specimens of children's writing, which appear throughout the text, show errors made by young writers; they reveal immaturity and progressive achievement in both *content* and *form*. In addition they offer

a realistic approach to the nature of children's written expression and the teaching problems involved.

With keen insight which could come only from extensive research and successful teaching experience in the language arts, the authors present numerous concrete and practical suggestions to promote writing proficiency. They have smoothed the path for a more discerning understanding of the nature of writing, and of the experiences and training children need in order to write freely, clearly, correctly, and convincingly.

Edna Lue Furness  
The University of Wyoming

*American English Series for the Study of English as a Second Language.* By Members of English Section, Department of Education, San Juan, Puerto Rico, Pauline M. Rojas, Director. Charles C. Fries, Consultant. Book

I, \$1.60. Book II, \$1.68. Teachers' Guide, \$4.00. D. C. Heath and Co., 1952.

A series of two books designed for the elementary and secondary schools, respectively, for instruction in the English language in non-English-speaking environments. It represents a "pioneer attempt to apply to the teaching of English as a second language. . . . The recent advances of linguistic science." The units in the two books represent a systematically arranged sequence of the characteristic patterns of American English, evidently the product of the well-known researches of Professor Fries.

The Teachers' Guide is especially interesting. It is a highly detailed and specific manual for the teaching of the successive lessons in the two books. Each page of the textbooks is reproduced in the *Guide*.

Although the Series is intended for foreign students, it is suitable for use in bi-lingual communities.

## DEVELOPMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDHOOD

(Continued from Page 115)

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# BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

EDITED BY MAY HILL ARBUTHNOT

[May Hill Arbuthnot is well-known as teacher, writer, and lecturer in the field of children's books. She is author of the volume, *CHILDREN AND BOOKS* (Scott, Foresman, 1947) and a member of the faculty of Flora Stone Mather College, Western Reserve University.]

## *For Early Adolescents*

*Trail of the Little Paiute.* By M. O'Moran. Illustrated by Claire Davison. Lippincott, \$2.50.

After the white men invaded the arid hunting grounds of the Paiute Indians, there was not always enough food. In times of famine, it was a tribal law that the old and helpless must walk into the wilderness to certain death. When Inyo's grandmother is the first one to be sent away, the boy rebels. He follows his grandmother, determined to lead her across the mountains and the terrible desert to her own tribe in California, and this he finally does, after incredible hardships.

This book is important for its interpretation of Indian character and laws. It is also a dramatic record of the Paiute's last stand against the white men. Jabouri, the Paiute chief, brave and bitter, Doomdah, the remarkable old grandmother, the boy Inyo, torn between his new liking for white men and his loyalty to his tribe, are characters the reader is not likely to forget.

May Hill Arbuthnot

*Meph, the Story of a Pet Skunk.* By John and Jean George. Illustrated by Jean George. Dutton, \$2.75.

This book is more than the story of a pet skunk. It is the story of an eroded farm, an unhappy farmer, and a bewildered boy who is the victim of both. The baby skunk proves to be an appealing pet for the lonely boy, Sycamore,

who is on the verge of making a tragic mistake in his life. The amusing adventures of Meph, the conversion of farm and farmer to modern farm methods, and Sycamore's discovery that life in the country can be fun as well as work, make an absorbing tale. This author-zoologist and author-artist team have done excellent characterizations of the disturbed human beings and the charming Meph. It is a more complex tale than *The Masked Prowler* or *Vulpes the Red Fox* but it is equally absorbing.

M. H. A.

*Clown at Second Base.* By C. Paul Jackson. Crowell, \$2.50.

No doubt teen age boys who eat, breathe, and live baseball will find this book an engrossing one. This reviewer must confess that the baseball jargon and the descriptions of technical plays were beyond her comprehension. The hero of the story seems emotionally immature, but he learns his lesson.

H. M. L.

*Larry's Luck.* By Mary Urmston. Illustrated by Jean MacDonald Porter. Doubleday, \$2.50.

To Larry and Skip, Elmhurst Annual Field Day had always been exciting to witness, but Field Day this year would be extra special because they could participate if they could pass the tryouts. The ordeal of training and passing the tryouts faded into insignificance, however, when the boys learned of a movement instigated by old Man Smithers to discontinue Field Day. Larry, his tree-house gang, their

fathers and friends proved equal to the crisis, in spite of misunderstandings, feuds, and jealousies among themselves. And in the course of field day Larry's luck took an unexpected turn and his victory came in an unscheduled event.

Frances Rees.

*The Lonesome Sorrell.* By Keith Robertson. Illustrated by Taylor Oughton. Winston, \$2.50.

Cliff and Cinnamon are a curious boy and horse team in which the boy is not interested in the horse, but the horse is interested in the boy. With the help of Abbie, a real horse lover, and his desire to win a difficult cross-country race, Cliff develops into a responsible horse owner. The antagonism between Cliff and his young enemy, Everett, is left in an unresolved state which weakens the ending of the story.

Barbara Ewell

*Son of the Stars.* By Raymond F. Jones. John C. Winston, \$2.00.

The alien survivor of a flying saucer crash is befriended by an earth family, regarded with cold suspicion by the military, and finally stands alone between his people bent on the earth's destruction and his human friends. Well-written, with a thought provoking theme that raises this story above the run-of-the-mill science fiction.

Ruth Robinson

*Saralee's Silver Spoon.* By Marjory Hall. Decorations by Catherine Barnes. William Sloane Associates, \$2.75.

This is called a career novel for girls and will appeal to high school girls. The author deals with a modern problem—the girl with a small talent and large ambitions. Saralee's solution of her problem will be highly satisfactory to the girl reader. There is a great deal of authentic and very interesting information in this book about silversmiths and sterling silver.

Lyla Hoffine

*Lucky Miss Spaulding.* By Eleanor Arnett Nash. Julian Messner, Inc., \$2.50.

This is an easy-to-read book for high school girls. It is called a romance for young moderns

and is the story of Caroline Spaulding who starts as stock girl in retail clothing and climbs steadily. Two young men cause emotional conflict which Caroline must deal with while she carries on her daily life. Girls interested in clothes will read the book.

Lyla Hoffine

*The Haunted Reef.* By Frank Crisp. Illustrated by R. M. Powers. Coward-McCann, Inc. \$2.75.

*The Haunted Reef* is a combination mystery and adventure story laid in the South Sea islands, primarily for junior and senior boys but will probably be read by girls and adult readers as well. It is unusually well written and the lore of the South Sea is explained so well as the author unfolds his story that the reader enjoys it as well as the mystery. The boy who must have much urging to read a book might well be started with this story where something is happening every minute.

Lyla Hoffine

*Copperhead Hollow.* By Gerald Raftery. New York: William Morrow, \$2.00.

Two boys, each of whom looks forward to summer camp with apprehension, become fast friends, and in sharing each other's hobbies discover a uranium deposit on camp property to save it from bankruptcy. The story of Jim and Steve has enough of mystery and adventure to make it good reading for the ten to fourteen year old bracket—particularly boys.

Bernardine Schmidt

*Candle in the Night.* By Elizabeth Howard. Morrow, \$2.50.

Eighteen year old Tamsen Bradford went West in 1812 from her sister's home in New York State. She expected to keep house for her brother who had gone to Detroit seven years before, after the death of their parents. She found her brother married and the War of 1812 was soon to begin. The new way of life called for adjustment and patience, but with two suitors it was never dull. The author's style is good and readable as in her earlier works. She presents an

excellent set of values. More action than her *Peddler's Girl* of 1950. Authentic background and well-drawn picture of the period. There is more than a hint of romance which will appeal to older girls.

Catharine Stuart

*Jim Bridger; Greatest of the Mountain Men.* By Shannon Garst. Illustrated by William Moyers. Houghton Mifflin, \$2.75.

The author gives the reader an unforgettable picture of pioneer days in the areas between Missouri and western Montana and Wyoming. The leather-garbed trappers and trail-blazers characterize a courageous spirit that still seems to linger in what are now Yellowstone National Park and Jackson Hole. Children from eleven through fifteen will thrill to the savagery of nature, the camaraderie of friends under common stress, and the pageantry of the Old West.

Naomi C. Chase

#### For the Middle Grades

*Columbus, Finder of the New World.* By Ronald Syme. Illustrated by William Stobbs. Morrow, \$2.00.

Christopher Columbus is not an easy character to present to children. The drama of his life rises grandly to the successful conclusion of the first exploration. After that, failure stalks his path. He diminishes in heroic stature to a tragic ignominy which is hard for children to accept. In this brief, well-written biography, it is greatly to Ronald Syme's credit that he gives children the gloom as well as the glory. The Admiral of the Ocean Seas goes down to his death nobly, defeated, but still the hero of adventures more exciting than any story. This is one of the finest in the Morrow series of biographies for the middle grades.

May Hill Arbuthnot

*New World For Nellie.* Written and illustrated by Rowland Emet. Harcourt, Brace, \$2.00.

Nellie is a fantastic locomotive of cartoon fame, as British as London's *Punch* in which Nellie has been appearing. She even came to life and ran at the Festival of Britain. Now her creator, Rowland Emet, has made a beautiful

picture book of Nellie's adventures in the New World. With the help of a few goose feathers, Nellie flies over. But imagine her surprise when she comes down on some tracks and finds herself still up in the air. However, Nellie takes the elevated, the Deep South, and the Wild West in her stride and zips back to England as a submarine. So intricate is Nellie's mechanism and so multiple and complex her gadgets that every picture requires time and study. For this reason, Nellie's humor may be lost on the small fry, but children from nine or ten years to a hundred, will undoubtedly pore over the pictures and add gadgets of their own to Nellie's incredible equipment.

M. H. A.

*The Quarry Adventure.* By Lee Kingman. Illustrated by Barbara Cooney. Doubleday, \$2.50.

When twelve-year-old Lauri Sironen, from a large and happy Finnish-American family, takes on a summer job at Miss Pinckney's vacation residence, he does not bargain on entertaining city-bred Garnet, the Boston lady's delicate and too-serious little niece. Lauri's standing up to his job, Garnet's learning the give-and-take of family life, Mrs. Sironen's sympathetic management of her household are all warmly portrayed. Then, too, there is a mystery in the accident at the quarry, where Mr. Sironen was injured.

Elizabeth Lee Raynor

*Twenty and Ten.* By Claire Huchet Bishop. Illustrated by William Pene Du Bois. Viking, \$2.50.

Twenty French children and the Sister who teaches and cares for them in their mountain refuge decide to harbor ten Jewish children who are hunted by Nazi soldiers. The joy in sharing their frugal supplies, high courage and clever strategy in outwitting the Nazis all are here in a dramatic narrative. This poignant and beautifully written book will probably appeal to a wider audience than *Pancakes Paris* by the same author. Mr. DuBois' drawings are permeated with the flavor and spirit of the story.

Freda Freyer

*Everybody's Island.* By Amy Morris Little. Illustrated by Dorothy Bayley Morse. Dutton, \$2.75.

New York City is the Island which forms the backdrop for a well told story of two families, one with roots stemming to the colonial Dutch and the other, newly arrived Puerto Ricans. Historic spots of the city are explored giving flashbacks of old New Amsterdam. The theme of democracy and brotherhood is emphasized and the author leaves the reader with the feeling that New York is "everybody's island."

Freda Freyer

*Snoop Waits For Dinner.* By Hall Preston and Catherine Barr. Oxford University Press, \$1.75.

Snoop, the cat, was hungry and Mr. and Mrs. Chipmunk were moving across the street. Snoop watched them hopefully and moved closer and closer. But the chippers did not mind. They whisked and frisked right under Snoop's nose. Not until the last beautiful picture does the child discover how this duel of wits is going to end. The pictures are so full of action, one small girl had to show how the chippers danced.

M. H. A.

*The Lion On Scott Street.* By Jane Seipmann. Pictures by Clement Hurd. Oxford University Press, \$1.75.

A little boy spins a wild tale about what happened when a lion came walking down Scott Street and *he* took charge. When all the excitement is over, two questions remain. Did it really happen? And what would you do if a lion came walking down your street? A repetitional text makes this story especially good to read aloud and the bright pictures are delightful.

M. H. A.

*One Morning In Maine.* Story and Pictures by Robert McCloskey. Viking Press, \$2.50.

This is one of the most beautiful picture books Robert McCloskey (Caldecott Winner) has ever made, and that is superlative praise. Glorious pictures tell the story of Sal's exciting morning, when her first tooth came loose, she

lost it to the clams, and the outboard motor wouldn't work. Still, father, Sal, and Jane did get to Buck's Harbor and they did come home to mother and "Clam chowder for lunch!" No plot, just a morning in a child's life when growing up seems a bit scary but turns out delightfully. Reassurance, warm human relationships, and the beauty of the world and its creatures make this book significant.

M. H. A.

*A Hole Is to Dig.* By Ruth Krauss. Pictures by Maurice Sendak. Harper, \$1.50.

"Mashed potatoes are to give everyone enough," "A face is so you can make faces," or "A face is something to have on the front of your head." So the text goes, with several small lively pictures to each page, interpreting variations of the sentence theme. The pictures are deliciously funny, the text less inspired. The sentences sound like children's own definitions, and "Mud is to jump in and slide in and yell doodle doodledeedoo" invariably brings an appreciative chuckle.

M. H. A.

*Dee Dee's Birthday.* Pictures and story by Yen Liang. Oxford University Press, \$1.75.

Dee Dee is Chinese, but any child of any country would like to have a birthday in Pekin style. The day begins with Dee Dee hoping that he has been a good boy and will have a happy day. Then, when grandmother, aunt, cousins, brother, sister, and parents all send him gifts and help him to celebrate, he thinks maybe he has done pretty well. The foods, fire crackers, kites, and lanterns dazzle American children. This little book has indeed a unique gaiety and charm.

M. H. A.

*Percy, Polly, and Pete.* By Claire Turlay Newberry. Illustrated by the author, Harper, \$2.00.

Poor Millie, the mother cat, thought she would have to leave home to save her kittens from that awful baby Shasha, who would hug or pat kittens too hard. But when Shasha turned three, she turned into a nice little girl who was gentle with kittens. This is one of Claire New-



berry's most charming series of pictures and Shasha is her own little girl. M. H. A.

### For Younger Children

*Five Little Monkeys.* By Juliet Kepes. Houghton-Mifflin, \$2.50.

A story-picture book of exceptional merit. Buzzo, Binko, Bulu, Bibi and Bali were mischievous monkeys who played jokes on the other jungle animals, until one day the tables were turned and they pleaded for their lives. Later, they proved their worth by saving the animals from Terrible, the Tiger. Pictures in color and in black and white, are in a fresh, modern approach and together with the story assure the book a permanent place in children's literature. H. R. S.

*Brownny Bear's Picnic.* By Katherine Wood. Illustrated by the author. McKay Company, \$1.50.

Miss Wood, who is head of the Art Department at the Academy of the Assumption in Philadelphia, has written a pleasant tale about Brownny Bear's picnic and how he and his friends outwitted the hungry wolf. Her illustrations are superior to the story.

Danylu Belser

*Farm Friends and the Ugly Duckling.* Illustrated by Katherine Evans and Phoebe Erickson. Children's Press, \$2.40.

This large, delightful picture-book is, in truth, two books. The first half is almost a pure picture-book, in which it is evident that Pauline Adams knows the principles of good picture-book making for small children. Each beautiful, colorful page holds only a few appealing farm animals or fowls, with no background to confuse beginning "lookers." The second half is an abridgment of the story of Andersen's *Ugly Duckling*. For those who care to introduce children to Andersen before they are able to appreciate his inimitable style, this simple abridgment is ideal. The numerous accompanying illustrations are artistic and lovely.

Dorothy Hinman

*Wild Folk in the Woods.* By Carroll Lane Fenton. Illustrated by the author. John Day, \$2.50.

Introduces 36 different kinds of woodland animals that also live in cities and on farms. Stories begin with the activities of a particular creature, given a proper name. Then follows a brief account of the habits of an entire species. Sentences are short. Drawings are attention-getters and add additional information.

Ivah Green

*Look!* By Zhenya Gay. Illustrated by the author. Viking, \$2.00.

A very pleasing picture story for the young child with appealing soft pencil drawings of baby animals and brief text in rhyme. The author invites the reader to "Turn the pages of this book and Look!" and urges "There are more on the shelf. . . . Look!" L. E. C.

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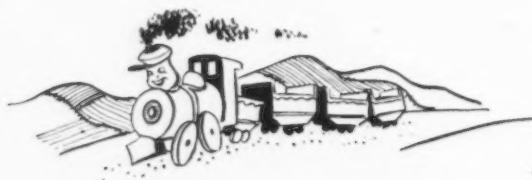
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